Colecção Autores Gregos e Latinos
Série Ensaios

Maria de Fátima Silva
Susana Hora Marques (eds.)

Tragic Heroines on Ancient and Modern Stage

Maria de Fátima Silva
University of Coimbra

Susana Hora Marques
University of Coimbra

(eds.)

Tragic Heroines on Ancient and Modern Stage

COMPETE

QREN QUADRO DE REFERÊNCIA ESTRATÉGICO NACIONAL
PORTUGAL 2007.2013

All the volumes of this series are submitted to a panel of independent referees.

Editors: Maria de Fátima Silva and Susana Hora Marques
Title: Tragic Heroines on Ancient and Modern Stage
Publisher: Centre of Classical and Humanistic Studies – University of Coimbra
(1ª/2010)
Academic Co-ordinator of the Editorial Plan: Maria do Céu Fialho
Other Collaborations: Delfim F. Leão, Frederico Lourenço, M. J. Almeida
Editorial Board: José Ribeiro Ferreira, Francisco Oliveira, Maria de Fátima Silva, Nair Castro Soares

Technical Director of the Collection: Delfim F. Leão
Design: Elisabete Cação, Nelson Henrique, Rodolfo Lopes

Universidade de Coimbra
Faculdade de Letras
Tel.: 239 859 981 | Fax: 239 836 733
3000-447 Coimbra

ISBN: 978-989-8281-40-1
Digital ISBN: 978-989-8281-41-8
Legal Deposit: 312705/10

Published under the Programme POCI 2010:

FCT
Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia
MINISTÉRIO DA CIÊNCIA E DO ENSINO SUPERIOR
POCI/2010

© Classica Digitalia Vniversitatis Conimbrigensis
© Centre of Classical and Humanistic Studies - University of Coimbra

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher, except for educational purposes, namely e-learning environments.

Contents

Preface 7

Introduction 9
Henri Schoenmakers, Platon Mavromoustakos

Medea, Clytemnestra and Antigone:
a psychological approach according to the tragedies
and the myths under the frame of the patriarchal society 27
Petros Vrachiotis

Rehearsing instabilities in Aidan Carl Mathews'
The Antigone 37
Anastasia Remoundou-Howley

António Pedro's *Antigone* on stage 63
Susana Marques Pereira

Sophocles' *Electra* by Krzysztof Warlikowski 75
Krystyna Mogilnicka

Medea's Sacrifice and the unsatisfied director:
Euripides' *Medea* by Anatoli Vassiliev 87
Anastasia Merkouri

Seneca's *Phaedra* - an over passionate heroine:
analysis of Hana Burešová's *Faidra* 109
Eliška Poláčková

Innocent victim or scheming seductress? Euripides' Phaedra
(*Hippolytus*) and Kalidas's Urvashi (*Vikramorvasiyam*):
a comparative study of two tragic heroines 121
Bijon Sinha

Preface

The present work is the result of the contributions presented at an international conference of scholars that took place on the 30th and 31st January 2009 at the University of Coimbra[1], as part of the activities of the Network Performance of Ancient Greek Drama, whose members include amongst others the Centre of Classical and Humanistic Studies of Coimbra.

Under the theme of "tragic heroines in classical and modern stage", the purpose of this conference was to allow the participants to share experiences and distinctive perspectives in the contemporary approach and treatment given to the plays of the Classical Antiquity, most of them related in one way or the other to the Classical Philology and to the Theatre.

The contributions originated from different European countries including the Check Republic,

[1] We would like to express our sincere thank you to Professor Frederico Lourenço and to Maria João Almeida for the valuable contribution towards the English version of certain pages of this work.

Greece, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the United Kingdom and Sweden – reflecting the considerable increment in the number of modern adaptations on stage of the Classical tragic plays across a variety of stages, particularly in Europe, from the second half of the 20th century as well as the interest shown in such performances by the contemporary audience.

The different presentations, 15 to 20 minutes long on average, were themed around the myths selected for the conference: Thebs, the Atreidae, Medea and Phaedra. Besides the considerations on the characters of the Greek and Roman traditions, equal attention was given to the modern adaptation of these myths, allowing for the identification of the different versions of a particular character or play at various moments and places, whose artistic directors, of different backgrounds and intents, allowed for a variety of different interpretations.

The programme combined a discussion of a more academic nature with a more practical one, since it also incorporated the production on stage of Plautus's *Poenulus* by the group "Thiasos" whose productions and back stage work had been previously brought to light by Professor Delfim Leão[2].

[2] Cf. also Ferreira, L. N., Jesus, C. A. M., eds. (2010), *FESTEA – Tema Clássico. Dez Anos de um Festival de Teatro (1999-2008)*. Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Clássicos e Humanísticos.

Introduction
Changing Attitudes towards Ancient Drama in Theatre Practice

In 2002 the European Network of Research and Documentation of Performances of Ancient Greek Drama (Arc-Net) started an intensive summer course about ancient Greek drama and its performance histories in different countries. The aim was to improve the understanding and exchange of ideas between the university departments of Classics and of Theatre Studies regarding (the study of) performances of ancient Greek drama. Students from different European countries studying Classics or Theatre Studies took part in the course. Instructors were teachers from those fields as well as invited theatre practitioners with experience in the staging of ancient Greek drama. Since 2002, this summer course has taken place every year. Students who participated also started to organize meetings and conferences for alumni to inform each other about developments in their research and/or practice. After conferences in Prague (2006) and Epidavros (2007), in January 2009 a conference was organised by students who had participated in the courses. This time the Classical Studies Department of the University of Coimbra, Portugal (Prof. Dr. Maria de Fátima Silva) hosted the conference.

The presentations at this conference are illustrative for changes in the approaches to ancient Greek drama, changes that had also been important themes in the intensive summer courses in Epidavros. It was these changes discussed in the summer course that informed or stimulated many of the presentations of the young researchers at this conference in Coimbra. In this introduction we give our impressions of the shifts in attitude towards the study of ancient Greek drama as experienced during the years that the intensive courses took place, which have led to a more open and less normative attitude towards the study of performances of ancient Greek drama. We focus on two overlapping problems: (a) the literary attitude towards ancient Greek drama, and (b) the question, who is responsible for communication within the theatre?

The literary attitude towards ancient Greek drama

Ancient Greek drama has often been considered first as literature. As a consequence, theatre makers and scholars tend to consider the text as the dominant medium of expression and as the most important part of theatrical performances as well. The fact that music, songs and dance in the fifth century B.C. were also important theatrical means of expression has sometimes led to lively experiments with one or more of those theatrical means, which were normal ingredients in the ancient performances. While not all of those means are always used in theatre performances of ancient drama, an important change particularly in the last decades of

last century is that theatre makers are paying much more attention to those elements. However, the dominant tradition in the performance history of ancient Greek tragedy in the twentieth century has been and still is that the text is seen as the most important means of expression. Performances could be characterised as belonging to what in German is called 'Sprechtheater', or speech theatre. This also has to do with the fact that it is the text that is considered 'classical'.

- The notion 'classical'

The notion 'classical' is usually associated with terms such as 'holy', 'eternal', and 'general', and as representing *la condition humaine.* These associations are linked with the propensity of theatre makers to read the plays from the fifth century B.C. without questioning the political, social and aesthetic context in which these plays function. It is no wonder, then, that those plays are considered 'eternal' or as showing the general *condition humaine*, because the readers can only read and understand what they themselves put into the words. Projecting their own ideas about human conflicts into these plays gives the feeling that the plays are timeless. The readers are often not aware that they are doing this. On the contrary, they are convinced they hear the voices of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes.

In performance history, this means that theatre makers hesitate to change the text even when elements

of a text are not understandable for a non-specialist audience—for example, the long lists of gods, heroes or family members in the choral songs. Another consequence is that the implicit or explicit ideologies in the plays don't get attention. Also, performance aesthetics have often more to do with performance history since the 19th century, than the limited amount of sources about the performances in the fifth century B.C. indicates, which point more in the direction of danced operas than to psychological text drama. The fact that those aesthetics confirm the norms and values regarding ancient Greek drama from the view of the producers as well as from the spectators has made performances more a ritualized festive celebration than a process of theatrical communication. The idea that meanings and experiences are contained in the text is one of the misunderstandings of an approach that does not deal with theatre as a system of communication. Meanings and experiences are in the heads of producers and audiences who, with their frames of reference, encode or decode the verbal and non verbal signs.

- Norms related to ancient Greek drama

The view of ancient drama from the fifth century B.C. also has been obscured by Aristotle and Classicism. Aristotle introduced ideas about an ideal model of tragedy. The theatre practice of performing tragedies in the fifth century was, however, more diverse than this ideal model of suggests. The fifth century was in fact an age of dramaturgical and technological experiments

and innovations. The introduction of the second and third actor, the change from trilogies with an ongoing story line to trilogies with another type of connection between the three parts, the increasing diversity in the functions of the chorus, new organised recognition scenes, changes of location within a tragedy, spectacular effects such as the introduction of a crane (used for example in *Medea* and *Peace*) or the *ekkyklema* to show inner scenes—all were means the dramatists and theatre makers used to compete with their colleagues in theatrical contests at festivals. They led to an astonishing variety of dramaturgical communication means.

Classicism made the Aristotelian model of ancient tragedies even more rigid, and the number of tragedies organised around this model—particularly in the French and German speaking theatrical cultures—shaped ideas about ancient tragedies far into the twentieth century. The huge changes in versions of the myths (for instance, the Medea myth by Euripides) and in the dramaturgical treatments of the same myths (we only have to compare the versions of the Electra-theme by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides) show how the myths were used as templates. Deviations from familiar myths emphasized the moral, political, or social points of view the dramatists wanted to transmit. Not accepting adaptations of ancient Greek drama in fact represents an ideological position that is opposed to the practices of the ancient dramatists themselves.

Who is responsible for communication within the theatre?

Another general problem responsible for the attitude towards ancient Greek drama has to do with struggles about the question, who is responsible for what is happening in the theatre: the author, or the director and other theatre makers? This struggle has particularly accompanied the growing importance of the director, beginning in the last decades of the nineteenth century. At first, some directors saw themselves primarily as the servant of the authors and tried to stage their supposed intentions as well as possible; but here the above mentioned problems about the dominance of the texts became obvious. That this sometimes may lead to paradoxical discrepancies between the intentions of an author and the director we know from the famous correspondence between Chekhov and Stanislavsky about *The Cherry Orchard* (1904)[1]. Still, the general idea existed that sticking to the text of the dramatists was essential and even a precondition to guarantee that the 'authentic' voice of the dramatist was being heard. However, the assumption that only an integral use of the text would convey the intended meanings and effects of the dramatists does not pay attention to the completely different frames of reference of audiences who are not ancient Greeks. This means that quite different meanings and effects are possibly conveyed.

[1] About the intentions of the ancient Greek dramatists, we cannot find anything as well documented as in this famous case of the tension between Stanislavsky and Chekhov.

Directors who were more aware of this problem emphasised the fact that a theatrical event is an act of communication in the present between theatre makers and spectators. From this point of view adaptations from the texts and the use of quite different stage images could help compensate for the missing denotations, connotations and experiences of an audience different from the ancient Greek audience.

In addition to the position in which the director tries to restore the supposed communication process of the theatre makers from the past, two other positions can be distinguished. One of those positions is the focus on the deconstruction of ideologies in texts from other times and other cultures. The reflection about differences in ideologies in such cases becomes part of the performance. In the course of the 20th century this position has become more articulated and more dominant. An example is the performance of the *Oresteia* by the Belgian theatre Group Le Théâtre en Liberté (1997). When the actress playing Athena in the third part of this trilogy has to say the lines of Athena, that Orestes is not guilty because she is not born from a woman and therefore does not consider the killing of a woman as bad as the killing of a man, the actress starts to laugh about this text. Not as Athena, but as the actress. Again and again she tries to say the text but is not able to say the lines without laughing. Of course this is not spontaneous laughter, but rehearsed laughter that emphasizes the strange ideology behind Athena's vote.

The third position is one in which a director uses a text without caring about historical contexts and what the historical author might have meant. Only because the text may serve the director's intentions regarding actual problems in society (political, social, moral, or aesthetic) has the text been chosen as a basis for a performance. Directors with this approach to ancient (or in general, classical) texts choose very freely from the text and cut, add, or adapt texts, images and actions to make the performance fit their intentions.

- Theatre makers between innovation and renovation

Interesting in the performance history of ancient drama regarding the complicated relationship between the intentions and the impact and effect of the work of an author and a director is that in the twentieth century directors have used aesthetics that were experienced as innovations. Sometimes, however, those innovations were in fact renovations of elements of theatrical aesthetics from the fifth century B.C. When in the first decades of the twentieth century an explosion of innovations took place in which a huge variety of new aesthetic forms were explored, performances of ancient Greek drama were sometimes considered with new eyes. For example, Max Reinhardt explored the use of a space other than the proscenium stage of those days when he staged his *Oresteia* in 1919 as a mass spectacle in the 'orchestra'- type space in the Circus Schumann in Berlin, which offered the opportunity to stage masses

as well. It is an interesting paradox in theatre history that, in the ancient Greek theatres, the audiences had from everywhere in the theatre very good sight lines to the stage actions in the orchestra, whereas from the 16th century onwards it became quite normal for big parts of the audiences to no longer have optimal sightlines. Against this background it became an 'innovation' to establish good sight lines for every spectator again. This was the case since Wagner built his theatre of Bayreuth (1876) to stage the illusions of his mythical Worlds. Since the last decades of the 19th century and until the Second World War the idea of using ancient Greek and Roman amphitheatres has been developed in several countries. Mounet-Sully with the Comédie Française has played *Oedipus Rex* at the Roman amphitheatre of Orange in the south of France(1894), and later the ancient Greek theatre of Siracuse in Italy was used for performing ancient drama since 1914 with a performance of *Agamemnon*. In Greece the ancient theatre of Delphi was used for a festival of ancient drama (1927 and 1930) and the ancient Greek theatre of Epidavros with a performance of Sophocles' Electra directed by Dimitri Rondiris (1938). The festival dedicated to performances of ancient drama has been inaugurated in 1955 in the theatre of Epidavros and especially after the eighties and until our days has offered the possibility to numerous theatre groups and stage directors to explore and develop new ideas in using the ancient theatre spaces (e.g. Karolos Koun, Luca Ronconi, Peter Stein, Peter Hall, et.al.). However, the dominance of the convention

of traditional theatre buildings with proscenium stages or Italian type theatres remained so strong in central Europe, that, after the Second World War, performing ancient drama in orchestra-shaped spaces (e.g. Jean Louis Barrault in the fifties in France, Erik Vos in the sixties in the Netherlands) was again experienced as an innovation in the performance history of the second half of last century.

The same process is the case with choreographed movements of the choruses, with newly composed music used to support actions and movements in the performance space and with actors singing their parts. For theatre makers in the sixties of the last century (among others), frustration about the lack of power about the theatre space was so great that they left the traditional theatres and started to perform in garages, factory halls and other 'found' non-theatre spaces so that they could establish a spatial relationship between performance and spectators that was relevant for their dramaturgical choices and the experiences they wanted the spectators to undergo. A specific performance of ancient drama at the end of the sixties in which actors and spectators shared the same space is considered to be an important step in the development of postmodern theatre. We point at Schechner's performance of *Bacchae* under the title *Dionysos 69* (performed in 1968) which was not only innovative in the use of space. Schechner changed the text of Euripides, which was interwoven with texts from the actors themselves. Also, the physical contact between performance and spectator and the emphasis on the 'real'

identities of the actors (instead of on the characters in the fictional world) provoked questions about the freedom of theatre makers to deal with classical texts. But Schechner's answer was clear: theatre is communication in the present between the live theatre makers and the spectators.

- Back to the communicative function of theatre

The slowly but steadily increasing insight that, in the fifth century B.C., dramatists and theatre makers felt free to fundamentally change myths and introduce new structures and performative aesthetics has made theatre makers since the eighties and nineties feel less chained by the norms and values of the performance history of ancient Greek drama and by the restrictions the notion of 'classical' had put on the creativity of the theatre makers. In fact, a tendency from 'universal' to 'local'—or, better, from the presentation of general characteristics of *la condition humaine* to more specific references of a political, social or moral nature—took place. This change can be illustrated with the help of changes in the ideology and aesthetics of performances in Germany of the only trilogy from the fifth century that has been preserved: the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus. Peter Stein's production with the Schaubühne am Halleschen Ufer in Berlin of this trilogy (1980) is considered a landmark in the performance history of these plays because of the theatrical aesthetics he used and the ideological position he took. Aesthetically, we see in the first part of the trilogy anachronistic elements such as the building of rails in the auditorium by the chorus members of the *Agamemnon*, the old

citizens of Argos. The character Agamemnon arrives at the back of the auditorium and is led with Cassandra on a little chariot along the rails to the entrance of the palace, where Clytemnestra is waiting for him and welcomes him with sweet words before she kills him after he enters the palace. This makes the old men of Argos implicitly guilty for the death of Agamemnon, since they are aware that after his homecoming something terrible will happen in the palace. In the same performance we see how Apollo with the help of a simple elevator arrives at the place of action. We see also a renovation of aesthetic means in the use of the *ekkyklema* to show the body of Agamemnon after he is slaughtered inside the palace and later to show the dead bodies of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.

From a politically ideological perspective Peter Stein's production marks the end of a performance history in Germany in which the *Oresteia* is performed as a celebration of the founding of democracy in ancient Greece. The performance shows this interpretation extremely clearly by staging a lengthy voting scene. After the citizens have put their voting stones in a vase the result of the voting is shown to the audience, who is easily able to see as many black as white voting stones. The fact that as many stones are in favour of Orestes as against him makes the vote of Athena superfluous because in case of equal amounts of votes Orestes will not be considered guilty anyway.

In the nineties of the last century and in the first years of the twenty-first century the *Oresteia* was one of

the most performed classical plays in Germany, but in addition to the aesthetic innovative elements, the change in the ideological position of the theatre makers was particularly striking. Instead of the "celebration of the founding of democracy" – interpretation, doubt about whether what was founded was really a democracy was staged. Two examples clearly illustrate this fundamental change in ideological position as displayed in the performance. In 2003 Andreas Kriegenburg directed the *Oresteia* at the Kammerspiele in Munich. After making in the first play of the trilogy direct references to the United States' actions in Iraq (among others) by showing actors wearing masks of George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld who without motivation kill Cassandra, in the voting scene in the third play, *Eumenides,* a ritualized repetition of voting citizens is shown while the politicians in this scene do not seem to care at all about this voting process of the citizens. The influence of the citizens on politics is ridiculed in this way, implying that they have no influence on the decision-making process. The second example is a performance by the Schauspielhaus Dresden. In this performance in the former German Democratic Republic (DDR) the choruses were played by citizens from Dresden. In the pauses interviews with those citizens were shown on video screens in the halls around the auditorium about their feelings regarding democracy since the fusion of the BRD and DDR. The citizens were very critical and emphasised the lack of democracy. At the end of the performance the chorus of male citizens dressed in smoking jackets brought

presents for the Erinyes, the chorus consisting of women from Dresden. The presents contained all types of high-heeled shoes. Some women were very happy with the presents, others not, but they were forced by the male citizens to try to walk on them. In this way the theatre makers emphasized that the founding of democracy was in the first place a male activity and that this male dominance suppressed female forces and voices by attempting to shape women according to the ideals of the male citizens.

The few examples of the staging of classical dramas in the last decades of the nineteenth century illustrate an interesting process. Schechner's performance of *Bacchae* shows how, already at the end of the sixties, at the borders of the theatre system important changes in attitudes towards the staging of ancient Greek drama were taking place, whereas till the eighties in a country with a long tradition of performances of ancient Greek drama such as Germany the *Oresteia* with innovative aesthetics but with an emphasis on the 'founding of democracy' interpretation was being performed[2]. Since then, quite a number of performances (the *Oresteia* was at the end of the century in many countries the most performed classical play) show a changing attitude to the supposed intentions of the classical authors. The

[2] Peter Stein staged the same performance in 1994 in Moscow (in general the aesthetics were the same. The major difference was the image of the Erinyes). In this performance which was rehearsed and performed during the collapse of the former Soviet Union, scepticism about the stability of democracy became clear.

plays are staged as commentaries on actual discussions in our societies. By using the texts in this way and by not considering the texts as 'classical' or 'holy' theatre makers have brought back an attitude to the theatre system that changed versions of well-known myths can be used to highlight the opinions of the theatre makers about actual problems in society, inclusive of the aesthetics used. In that sense these theatre makers behave from a functional perspective more like the ancient Greek drama authors and theatre makers than when they stuck to the actual words of those authors. Theatre becomes again a means to express changing political, moral, social or aesthetic ideas.

It is interesting that in the book of articles based on the presentations of the conference in Coimbra, many examples of the changing ideas and attitudes towards performances of ancient drama can be recognized. For the organizers and instructors of the summer course of the European Network of Research and Documentation of Performances of Ancient Greek Drama it is very gratifying to see in the contributions to this volume the long-lasting effect the summer courses in Epidavros have had.

Henri Schoenmakers (University of Utrecht)
Platon Mavromoustakos (University of Athens)

Tragic heroines on ancient and modern stage

Medea, Clytemnestra and Antigone: a psychological approach according to the tragedies and the myths under the frame of the patriarchal society

Petros Vrachiotis
(University of Athens)

Greek tragedy is dominated by imposing female figures, heroines who have become symbols and admirable archetypes in every civilization through the centuries. Passionate women, blessed with natural beauty, wisdom, intelligence and courage, who dared to go beyond the narrow frame of their time, oppose the laws and their rulers and turn the social establishment upside down. There is no place for tragic heroines, in a patriarchal society. Their acts needed to be devalued and these women had to be presented as crazy witches, prostitutes, or murderesses of their relatives. Nevertheless these female figures always stood before these imputations like large stones. In order to marginalize women, the newly established man-dominated society tried to suspend these figures and replace them with softer ones, such as Penelope (faith and obedience), Antigone (duty), Alcestis (sacrifice and modesty) and Ariadne (abandonment). But even these new examples were beyond the usual ones and looked alike the older ones, which could not be tamed.

Medea turns the divine Order of things upside down using her tremendous knowledge: not only she

possesses the secrets of immortality, but she can beat death and give youth back to an elder. According to Euripides she is quite aware of her fate:

> *…If you offer fools some brand new wisdom,*
> *they'll consider you quite useless, not someone*
> *wise.*]
> *And if, within the city, people think of you*
> *as greater than those men who seem quite wise,*
> *you'll appear a nuisance. So it is with me.*
> *For I'm a knowledgeable woman.*
> *I make some people envious*[1].

Medea's name is not occasional. It derives from the verb μήδομαι which means 'I think, I discover, I foresee'. Her misfortunes commenced right after her wedding. Helping Jason to beat monsters and become a king, this *femina universalis* connected her name with the forbidden knowledge and the unexplored female soul. Men demanded women to be illiterate and silent. After the downfall of matriarchy, they established 'men-only' democracies and banished any knowledge they could not control. Thus, Medea has to be banished as an 'undesirable good'.

Euripides describes Medea as a crazy, jealous and mean woman. According to the myth, she is the ruler of life who can resurrect and revive people. But since only Zeus can resurrect Dionysus, Medea is forbidden to do so. We will never know if this 'witch' resurrected her

[1] Johnston, I. 2008: vv. 298-304.

children, because the Knowledge is buried and Medea is banished as an annoying alchemist.

Medea has turned the male world upside down: she betrayed her father, killed her brother and fell in love with Jason because she chose to do so. She is the untamed female nature carrying chaos, success, action and death within her. She has overwhelmed the pseudo-conventions and the laws of her time. Must she be punished, there and forth? Under what penalty? Euripides remains silent. Gods themselves stand powerless in front of her. Not only she is not punished, but she marries the great king of Athens, Aegeas, and provides with him a male heir, Medos.

Medea is referred to as a goddess in a forgotten Mycenaean slate. She was worshiped in Corinth until the Historic Ages. Ancient craters depict her as a priestess in Eleusis - as well as in Rome - or place her among the heroes in the Elysian Fields. The Greeks of South Italy honored her with hymns. Even Apollonius of Rhodes praised her as a "treasure" that saved the Argonauts, equal to Jason. But the annoying character of Medea is synonymous to horror until today. Our 'christianic' world is convicted to worship the safe model of a mother-virgin who has sacrificed her eroticism for the common good. The horrible Medea is interpreted as a half-lunatic jealous woman. Nevertheless, her impunity is not justified. Whoever tried to simplify Medea has failed.

Clytemnestra is a dreadful woman with a strange beauty. Agamemnon had to murder his own first cousin

Tantalus in order to have her. With this marriage he became a powerful ruler as he entered the mighty dynasty of Heracleidae, which counted 1.700 years of royal history and thanks to the powerful name of the dynasty, Agamemnon was appointed commander general of the Greek army against the Trojans.

But Clytemnestra is born to be a queen. After her husband's departure she takes over the kingdom and she reflects the female model of ruler: she exercises her rights and flirts freely with Aegisthus, as Agamemnon does with his bondmaids. When he returns victorious from Troy, Clytemnestra is worthy holding the double axe, the symbol of kingship. Neither she will hand it back, nor tolerate the presence of young Cassandra, Agamemnon's trophy from the war. She decides to kill Agamemnon - not with some poison - but with a weapon. She comes face to face with the tough general, while Aegisthus only strikes when the king has already passed away, just to claim his throne.

Clytemnestra will neither repent, nor consider her deed to be a crime. Speaking to her daughter Electra, she will define this murder as a mother's revenge in the name of Iphigenia. Clytemnestra is all about woman-power. No one could have her as a trophy. The men of her time were deeply attracted to her. The tragedians were messed up by her. And even today, we are struck with awe when we refer to her. As a heroine she absorbs the *dramatis personae* in Agamemnon. She rules over the stage invincible, cruel and independent. She has no place in the patriarchal society, where women have to conform according to rules set by men.

Clytemnestra is presented as an ordinary woman only in *Electra* by Euripides. She runs towards her persecuted daughter when she finds out that she has a grand child. The great queen is now running after a baby like an ordinary grandmother. In such a society, Clytemnestra can only be punished as a mother. In this kind of society, a woman can only be tolerated as a mother. Electra can hate her mother as much as she wants, but she is forbidden to hate her father who has a pregnant mistress of her age. The tragedians will not allow Agamemnon to apologize, unlike Clytemnestra, who is guilty and has to pay with her own life.

But the queen of Argos has also another aspect: the tragic matricide she is representing is probably re-echoing our own malevolent side. Perhaps it is addressed to us as a hidden thought which cannot be discussed and so it has to be buried in the strange and dark undergrounds of our subconscious. Clytemnestra is - at the same time - "beloved" as well as "hated", as crushed Electra says while mourning her.

Antigone is the big and unpleasant surprise for Sigmund Freud, as she uncovers the deception of the so-called 'Oedipus Complex'[2]. For neither she, nor her brothers and sister, are children of an incestuous marriage. In *Odyssey* 11. 271-281, Oedipus meets his mother Epicasta (not Jocasta!) and there is no mention of his ignorance or self-blinding. According to Pausanias, these verses are evidence that Oedipus had no children by his mother:

[2] Eleftheriou, A. 2005: 18908-18916.

> *For how could the report of his wickedness be immediately abolished, if he had four children by Jocasta? These children indeed were the offspring of Euryganea the daughter of Hyperpas: and this is evinced by the author of the verses called Oedipodia. Onasias painted for the Platæenses Euryganea, with a sorrowful countenance, on account of the battle between her sons*[3].

Crucial information is also given by Pherecydes from Syros (4th century b.C). Oedipus neither took his eyes out, nor left Thebes. He married a third wife, Astymedusa, daughter of Sthenelus, and lived out his life as a great and respected leader (Pherecydes F95 in Jacoby *FGrH*). Of course the tragic poets and the audience had read Homer and must had been aware of the myth. Still Oedipus is an incestuous person (husband to his mother/brother to his children). I guess because the plot needed to be more complicated, and thus more dramatic.

But let us return to Antigone. Oedipus' daughter is so bold that although she is afraid of death she is defying him, reminding us that sometimes we must defend what we have proclaimed.

Antigone has a disastrous effect on Creon's life. His son Haemon and his wife Eurydice will commit suicide on account of his persistence to punish her. Creon is known for ordering Antigone's execution, not because of any virtue. Finally he is disgraced and

[3] Taylor, T. 1824: 11.

humiliated, because his conflict with the "unimportant" girl is the antithesis between *Kratos*, 'power', and the ideals of a noble soul.

Antigone is the *exemplum* of devotion and resistance. Creon is a leader expressing the law of the city-state but he refuses to bury a dead man. Which law is he appealing to? What is going on beyond his misogynism? Antigone is a sensitive girl with the unquestionable *ethos* and a thousand more virtues. At the very moment she stands in front of Creon, she is carrying on her delicate shoulders all the characteristics of the previous female figures: the chaos of Medea and the rough determination of Clytemnestra. Creon's nightmare is a power he cannot control or tame – a proud Doric column in the shape of a sweet girl. If he was to face Hercules, he would have appeared servile and magnanimous, but Antigone is an ant he has to crush.

Both Creon and Antigone stand for the Law. However, Creon holds the power. When Antigone is brought in front of him, he commands her to look at him, but she ignores him. She refuses to honor him with a single look, and Creon is the only one who can feel her actual and deepest contempt. Antigone regards him as the *miasma* of the city, a coward and a timid man. She will not look at him, not because she is afraid of him, but because she does not want to be contaminated by his disgusting presence. Antigone bares the halo of the Heroic Times. Creon realizes that if somebody could arm her, she would not hesitate to kill him - or anyone who would try to stop her from executing her duty. Her

figure is too much for the patriarchal society, thus, she has to be abolished.

Antigone is addressing her last words towards the dead members of her family:

> *But I cherish good hope that my coming will be welcome to my father and pleasant to thee, my mother, and welcome, brother, to thee*[4].

At this point I believe it is crucial to recall Sophocles' version of Oedipus the King, as well as his Electra, although her example is not being discussed here. Based on these two tragedies, Sigmund Freud took the chance to lay down the 'Oedipus' and 'Electra Complex'. According to the last theory, Antigone's resistance lies not in her courage to do so, but also because she is "in love" with her father and her brother. The least we can say is that Freud is an ignorant, because even Sophocles knew that Antigone was a child of a lawful marriage, and not of an impious union. Nevertheless, the so called 'Father of Psychoanalysis' took the chance to devise this farce and forget his forefather Lot, Patriarch of the Jews, who had slept with both of his daughters and left them pregnant (*Genesis* 19. 31-35). Neither Oedipus was in love with his mother, nor did his daughters fall in love with him. On the contrary, Lot's daughters consciously had sex with their father, giving birth to incestuous children, as well as to moral and social questions.

[4] Jebb, R. C. 1904: vv. 897-899.

Medea, Clytemnestra and Antigone are amongst the strongest tragic figures, but the list of the tragic heroines is a long one. All of them are strong, resistant and indiscipline in spite of their great afflictions. They have every characteristic of a female prince and they are stronger than men, as they are powerful personalities. In his *Principe*, Machiavelli praises these virtues as a constitutive element of the male power. But this is a forbidden area for females. The Christians will lock women up in their appartments and turn them into weak and pale mistresses, keeping knowledge away from them. Knowledge and power can become dreadful weapons in the hands of a woman. Only "drippy" Bush and Bin Laden have the right to threat the mankind!

Bibliography

Baconicola-Ghéorgopoulou, C. (1994), "Filicide in Euripides", in *Moments of Greek Tragedy.* Athens: M. Kardamitsa Book Institute, 100-103.

Eleftheriou, A. (2005), " 'Oedipus Complex': a historical forgery. How did Freud distort Sophocles?", *Davlos* 282. Athens: 18908-18916.

Jebb, R. C. (1904), *Sophocles. Antigone.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Johnston, I. (2008), *Euripides. Medea*. Virginia.

Kalokyres, C. D. (1950), "The ethical philosophy of Sophocles", *Elliniki Dimiourgia* 5. 47. Athens: 99-111.

Retoula, A. (2008), "Rebel-women: Diachronic prototypes of the female soul", *Davlos* 312. Athens: 21981-22002.

Taylor, T. (1824), *Pausanias. The Description of Greece* 3 - chap. 5. London.

Yahanatzis, Y. (2002), *The religious misogynism: Woman in the "paradises" of monotheism.* Rafina: Albouro Publications.

Rehearsing instabilities in Aidan Carl Mathews' The Antigone

Anastasia Remoundou-Howley
(National University of Ireland, Galway)

"In disoriented times, we cannot accept the return of the old, deadly figure of religious sacrifice; but neither can we accept the complete lack of any figure, and the complete disappearance of any idea of heroism […] Our task is: How can we find a new heroic figure, which is neither the return of the od figure of religious or national sacrifice, nor the nihilistic figure of the last man? Is there a place, in a disoriented world, for a new style of heroism"?

A. Badiou, *The Contemporary Figure of the Soldier in Politics and Poetry*

"…and he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp".

"Leviticus" 16:26, *The Bible*

In searching for what Badiou terms "a new style of heroism" and a "new heroic figure" (2007)[1] during the political and social disillusionment of our modern times, Sophocles' *Antigone* has ironically come to represent a link and a rupture at the same time between old and new models of heroism and by extension between ancient and modern tragedy. More significantly, *Antigone*'s modern reception signifies a fundamental re-turn to the central

[1] Badiou, A. 2007.

issues that concerned not only the ancient world but also our modern consciousness for she, more than any other tragic figure, exemplifies "a disruptive rendering of the very structure of the tragic hero, which in effect means a disruptive meditation on the essential political significance of tragedy itself"[2]. Since this tragedy has as its central protagonist a female, Antigone's ambiguous position is further implicated in a double paradox residing at the heart of gender politics: she is a girl (*paīs*) threatening Creon's masculine rule by exercising and exorcising the same qualities she herself opposes, i.e. a hardness assimilating the masculine quality. Unlike other tragic heroines, this creation of Sophocles famously described by Göethe as "the most sisterly of souls"[3], posits the term "tragic heroine" under reconsideration. Antigone, as Stathis Gourgouris contends, can be hardly seen as an *exemplum*: she rather constitutes a problem and an *aporia* as she constantly returns to re-inscribe a question mark in our interpretations and reinterpretations of the play's themes. This essay will examine the ways in which Antigone's status as an iconic tragic heroine and a canonical tragic model is contested and destabilized in the loose adaptation by Irish author Aidan Carl Mathews.

In his controversial appropriation which was written and performed in the light of twentieth century traumas and apprehensions, local, national (Irish) and

[2] Gourgouris, S. 2003: 129.

[3] Quoted in Steiner, G. 1984: 1. See also Johann Wolfgang Göethe's poem invoking *Antigone* in the elegy of 1779 called "Euphrosyne".

international events, Mathews rehearses[4] a brave meta-theatrical experiment and provocatively politicizes the aesthetic: his rereading and rewriting of Sophocles' myth, on the one hand, underscores his belief in the centrality of instability that *Antigone*'s character engenders in philosophy and theories of subjectivity, and here, in modern theatrical practices. From Aristotle to Hegel and from there to Judith Butler and Joan Copjec's seminal contemporary theorizations, *Antigone*'s case is a conflictual *topos* where tragedy (as text and as performance) and philosophy strive to be reconciled. On the other hand, and within these same premises, Mathews questions both the obsession of Western Philosophy with the "self" rather than the "other" and this tragic heroine's almost sacred stature as a classic, with savage humour and irony.

Through a series of paradigmatic interventions (textual/ ideological/ performative), he destabilizes her classical identity as Greek canonical text, myth, archetype, re-sister and heroine and replaces it with a fantasy of Antigone as the anti-heroine, the alienated being, the martyr, the scapegoat, the "ultimate symbol of the ineffectual"[5] that plays the same role of the dissident for centuries now. Or to paraphrase Badiou's

[4] The title of this paper borrows its terminology from the playwright's own arguments: "Philosophy in the West begins with a notion of the Self, but it seems to me that it might have done better to begin with the Other. Accordingly, *The Antigone* which I've written rehearses the theme of instability, of a deep-seated privation which makes persons hate themselves while resenting the very individuals they most desire" (Mathews, A. 1984d: 18).

[5] McDonald, M. 2002: 59.

argument, Mathews, in his quest for a new type of tragic hero, essentially deploys Antigone's tragedy within a novel system of subverted "heroism" which deliberately returns to the ever-clichéd place of "the old figure of religious or national sacrifice" and "the nihilistic figure of the exhausted" model in order to rehearse and restage the play's numerous instabilities in relation to natural law and state control, civil disobedience and spectres of citizenship, kinship and piety.

In 1984 alone, the year of the Irish *Antigone*-fever, three appropriations of *Antigone* emerged in Ireland, North and South, in a year that signaled massive national sociopolitical transformations. First came the rejection of the divorce referendum and of abortion rights, then the passing of the Criminal Justice Bill, a proposed government legislation that infringed on Irish civil liberties by increasing the power of the police. All of these were heated issues which divided Irish public opinion, and caused a rift between the Catholic Church and the state. Almost a decade earlier, the author had seen his first *Antigone* in Athens, two weeks after the Greek dictators' arrest in 1974: "The Athenians were booing the colonels, but I knew that as soon as they came out of this non-violence play, they would go out and beat up policemen"[6]. It is interesting that his first encounter with the play took place during the turbulent period of the military junta in the Greek capital and his version was created a decade later, in troubled and divided Ireland, for the Dublin stage. It is valid to say that

[6] Mathews, A. 1984a: 4.

within the frame of the times in which Aidan Mathews presented the first modern version of *Antigone* to the Irish audience at the Project Arts Centre in Dublin, the motive was explicitly political apart from aesthetic: it was a powerful plea by the playwright against apathy and passivity, for action and civil disobedience. What is more, Mathews' subversive writing style constitutes an exercise in postmodernist terms. The result of this project substitutes a conventional narrative of tragedy as solely about kings, queens, heroes and gods with a language based on disruption, fragmentation, duplication, and irony in form and content.

This version is important for another reason too: it revives the myth of a female dissident in an otherwise "antimythical era"[7], bringing forth the notion of male re-writing under the shadow of the female sex/ other. Mathews, in un-silencing the female voice of Antigone points to the violence committed against women in a time when debates of that sort had just started to be taken into consideration, particularly in Ireland. Undoubtedly, the role of Irish women had changed dramatically during the late 1960s as a natural consequence of the worldwide socio-political transformations concerning human rights, but the overall marginalisation of women persisted. During the 1980s, issues such as equality, female participation and representation in politics, education, and the working place, on the one hand, but also, the freedom of women to be responsible for their own bodies through the legalization of contraception

[7] Gourgouris, S. 2003: 1.

and the access to information on heated ethical problems such as mixed religion marriages, sexuality, abortion, and divorce (most of which still constitute major battles to be won against inherited religious *mores*), were discussed and debated amid an atmosphere of increasing tension between the Catholic Church and the State. This ideological battle that has been dividing Ireland in relation to debates on public and private morale, could not be better portrayed than in the eternal clash between Antigone and Creon.

During this period, another major change had occurred in terms of dramatic approaches: the transition from conventional categories of theatre to more modern forms of dramatic discourse. Mathews' dramatic model was coming as a successor to pre-existing debates about the troubling effects of cultural trauma and historical amnesia brought about by the haunting omnipresence of the two successive World wars. Previous modernist writers had dealt with the myth of Sophocles' inflexible daughter and had exploited the easily-adaptable *Antigone*-material in order to critique and attack specific political ideologies: Jean Anouilh's 1944 version, for example, is remembered as both sympathetic to the French Resistance and complicit with Nazi ideology, addressing a figuration of the heroine which should not be elided: in it she is reconfigured as "the model fascist- youthful, vigorous, and rebelliously uncompromising"[8] urging us to theorize her case and her appeal in contemporary employments of the myth. Soon after the Parisian

[8] Quoted in Fleming, K. 2006: 182.

staging, around 1948, Bertolt Brecht produced a version of *Antigone* based on the famous translation of 1803 by Friedrich Hölderlin in Berlin. In many ways, *Antigone* served as the perfect aesthetic project of recuperation for a post-war and post-fascist Germany and Europe. Mathews was conscious of his predecessors' commitment to challenging *Antigone*'s past, as well as their modernist propositions concerning the progressive, engaged work of art. In the decades that separate these international productions temporally and spatially, from the 1940s traumatized Europe to the transitional societies of the 1980s like troubled Ireland, the resurrection of *Antigone* is highly suggestive. Mathews is fascinated by the fusion of the personal and the political, the irrationality, rage, and violence, the wild Dionysian traits of the myth of *Antigone* which he rewrites from scratch as a saga of perpetual denouement. Affected by his times and the legacy of theatre after modernism, after the stylistic and ideological revolution brought about by the "theatre of the absurd," Mathews is in quest of an appropriate ideological model to accommodate inherited historical trauma while simultaneously searching for a language to accommodate the absurdity of history itself. This model, very much like Anouilh and Brecht, he finds in *Antigone*.

The director of the performance, Michael Scott, claimed that this was certainly not a version or updating of the original but a brand new play. The way both director and playwright understood the play lead to particularly illuminating perspectives: they mutually

"wanted to recuperate the source text, to cut cleanly through the intermediate readings proposed by Brecht and Anouilh, and to renew the hysteria and crisis of the primal plot so that the Theban site could host a thermonuclear scene"[9]. The original *Antigone* re-opens the question of feminism's relationship to tragedy in its contemporary philosophical quests, but Mathews revisits this contested interpretive site by rejecting the tragic nostalgia: his version is not a forceful feminist manifesto but rather the iconography of an androgynous anti-hero, and her myth "repatriated" as a parable of sexless non-heroism.

Mathews, indeed, sees *Antigone* as the classic scapegoating play, the ultimate study of martyric energies. His interest in anthropology and comparative religion justifies to a great extent the intertextuality and the richness of philosophical and literary allusions. In reconstructing *Antigone*'s "cowed form"[10], Mathews projected a postmodern scenario that questioned the premises of Western thought, but also offered an alternative to its collapse: the relativity of meaning and the abandonment of all meta-narratives claiming to legitimate foundations of knowledge. The poet and playwright viewed in retrospect his experience of rewriting the classical text for the stage, as an "anxiety to avoid the stylized, the stately, the ceremonious; to oust the inertia of our customary appreciation of the text and to introduce instead the energy of a startled re-

[9] Mathews, A. 1984d: 18.
[10] Ibid.

cognition"[11]. Most notably, the dedication of the play to French philosopher René Girard[12] (who was Mathews' professor at Stanford University) announced an explicit intention to re-cognize in depth the dynamics of culture and the primacy of social order as these are shaped upon the genesis of all myth, hence, the genesis of tragedy. The scope of this reading of *Antigone,* steadily and forcefully underscored his belief that violence and barbarism are at the heart of the sacred, while it sought to understand its mechanisms as they appear in any sacrifice that restores order in society: in Antigone's persistent sacrificial wish, in the militaristic regime at the outset of the play, in *the odd little breeze from the North* (3)[13] reminding everyone of the *pro patria* sacrifices in Northern Ireland, or in the technological, emotional, social and political a-morality of modern power-states in the prophetic

[11] Ibid.

[12] Girard, R. 1993. Most influentially René Girard has developed theories of sacrifice as a social process that take tragedy as a key example. For Girard, sacrifice- the central ritual of Greek religion- is to be seen as an institution that works to direct and control violence within the social group. In sacrifice, violence is sacralised and thus bounded by the rituals of religious observation. A surrogate, that is, a figure like the scapegoat which takes on itself the violence from within the group, is chosen as victim and is killed ritually. The crisis, the disorder, the violence, is avoided by such transference and such control. Tragedy is a dramatization -and thus ritualization- of the force of threatening, undifferentiated violence, a representation which displays the threat of disorder to expiate it. ("To know violence, is to experience it", "tragedy is the child of sacrificial crisis"). This definition will assist in our understanding of Antigone's death as a sacrifice, and her as scapegoat against Creon's *realpolitik*.

[13] I am personally indebted to the playwright for providing me with a copy.

Orwellian year 1984 (the year of its production) and beyond. In this version, *Anti-gone,* like the etymology of her name suggests, is an anti-heroine, or even a non-heroine. She opposes heroism and glory like she opposes her incestuous line of descent, her *genos*. In Mathews' version she even opposes tragedy.

The first line in Mathews' script blurs time and space, deliberately avoiding to place the action within a single cohesive historical moment: *Set in Ireland in the 1980s B.C., soon after Sparta had entered the war on the German side* (1), the play (which remains unpublished to this day) primarily prepares the audience for an illusionist trip, almost a kaleidoscopic view of history, the devastating effects of war, and the traumatic outcome of risky politics. This is a notion of time which occupies a dynamic, teleological character for several reasons: for one thing, it literally defines the temporal distance between fifth-century Athens and twentieth-century Ireland. Second, with the dyad Sparta-Germany as historical allusions, it reminds us of the catastrophic consequences of the Peloponnesian War and the Second World War, the latter echoing Theodor Adorno's aphorism for the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz. Writing against Adorno and in the same lines, Mathews' version fosters the view "that suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man to scream"[14]. Heamon who has become Heman in Mathews' scenario, urges the Chorus into praxis: *We have an opportunity to collapse History. You and I together. To*

[14] Quoted in Hall, E. 2004: 195.

begin all over. To resume time. To become totally human. To put all of this behind us[...]To step out of the soiled clothing of culture (5). Mathews' point seems to be that history is dead and that only myth has a recurring force: it always returns in times and places where (im)possibilities and (in)stabilities abound. His script contains a number of powerful signifiers most of which point to a political re-reading of *Antigone* as a meta-theatrical play: the theatre-within-theatre technique, the renaming of some of the characters, the distribution of copies of the Criminal Justice Bill to the audience- which was read at the end of the first act and during the intermission-, the purposeful juxtaposition of past and present time, the alteration of the traditional role of the audience and the direct communication between actors and spectators, all point to reworking of the myth both as a poetic drama and a theatre of experimentation in action.

Among the unhappy society of the play, the relationship of the police force to the city's ruler is considered in depth, even to quoting liberally from the controversial Irish Criminal Justice Bill, quotes that made many believe they were actually taken from George Orwell's *1984*. In the desolate modern landscape of the stage, his new characters gradually throw the ancient masks to uncover the delicate and dangerous distinction between role and self, private identity and public *persona*, tragedy and comedy: Antigone introduces her common, non-heroic self: *I represent ordinariness… tens of thousands of faceless women. Women who stand in queues and wait. And their waiting is more busy, more*

concentrated, than all the bustle of men (36). Mathews' *Antigone* operates as a way of talking about historical accountability through a radical critique of history (*The children are eating the stuffing out of old couches* (20)). As events unfold throughout his version, the constant reminder of the Chorus, *We're goin' round in circles* (12), underlines the inescapability of violence that is not only central to human history but crucial to it. Antigone is portrayed as a silent, passive young girl, tired of her cruel destiny (*I don't want to set an example* (12)) and acknowledges the position history has saved for her: *I know I'm colourless. I know I'm abrasive. I know I'm a bore. But I'm right, God help me, I'm right. And I have to go on being right until somebody sends help* (36).

A heavily pregnant Ismene reminds *Antigone* that it is her duty to *take the good with the bad* (17). A caricatured and submissive Heman, plays out the stereotype of the macho male: deploying the discourse of blind filial allegiance to Creon, and under the shade of a consistent misogyny, he degrades Antigone and condemns her deed. For Haemon Antigone was *axia timēs* (worthy of honor), but for Heman she lacks *nous*/*noesis* primarily due to gender: *Such a waste. Such a squandering [...] You could have been my wife if you'd had any nous. You could have had me. Do you have any insight into what you've done to me* (49)? The dramatization of his apathy (*She's quite delusional. Why do I love her*? (18)) further articulates itself in a vulgar mocking of female nature: *You ride your own death in the female astride. You want to go out in a blaze of glory. Saint Antigone. Wafting*

off into cumulus nimbus while the rest of us stay where we are in the ruins. Walloping nails into wood [...]No wonder Christ chose men. Your sex is diseased (49).

President Creon who is the conscientious Minister for Justice proclaims: *The aim is rehabilitation. A bringing to the awareness of evil, not a driving to despair* (17). The playwright adds an ad-libbing one-man-show Chorus to replace the Theban elders, a Critic and Chora, and omits the messengers, the sentry, Eurydice, and Teiresias. Antigone's brothers are referred to as 'Polyneices' and 'Peteocles', and Antigone's transgression is writing the letter P on the walls of the city, standing for the first letter of both her brothers' names. Creon's edict at the beginning quotes the New Irish Criminal Justice Bill verbatim, and instead of leaving Polyneices unburied, he erases his existence from all the city's records. Antigone rebels because her brother has been reduced to a non-person and ends up in a psychiatric institution in order to be ideologically rehabilitated. The actors are actually all set for the last production of a Sophoclean play they have been rehearsing and performing for centuries. Worn out, they cannot remember their lines and covet each other's words. They have come to lose faith in themselves and their roles: *I've been playing this part for three thousand years. I can't remember why I took it. It wasn't like me. I' m so confused. I have the odd flash, but it's fainter all the time. What I' m doing is absurd. And they still don't understand. None of them. And neither do I* (10). But the show must go on: the drama must be revived all over again by people who

deplore injustice and the severity of the parts to which they have been assigned to. Antigone's martyrdom must "embroil the state in a fresh cycle of violence"[15]. The Chora, a smart character-invention of Mathews that in Greek means 'the country', flamboyantly exclaims: *To stay when Antigone comes? To participate in History? To have a seat at the centre of the epoch? To marry the era, and be impregnated by it? I'd do anything. I'd donate my kidneys* (31).

Throughout Mathews' play, Creon and Heman unite their masculine forces as father and son, and quite often seem to complement each other. In his quest for *the whole Truth* (22), Creon seeks forgiveness and pity for his past sins through Heman's reciting of famous philosophical aphorisms[16]. The conflict of the condition of man for Creon is a painful, nightmarish process of self-definition through and against Otherness, consequently through and against Antigone (*She's multiplying inside me like a white blood-cell* (32)). The fundamental structure of this conflict unfolds in Mathews with perfect economy, like in Sophocles' text. Antigone yet is immeasurably more direct in the way she defines lines

[15] Scott, M. (1984) in the 'Programme Note for the *Antigone*': ii.

[16] See *The Antigone*: 23. The focus is on the notion of freedom and democracy with references to Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, the patriotic American tradition of political pamphlets *The American Crisis* (1776-83) by Thomas Paine (who was ostracized for his atheism), and *What America Means to Me* by Pearl Sydenstricker Buck, the first American woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. Creon records in his dictaphone: "I love it: "Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men and women, undergo the fatigue of supporting it" found in Paine's influential text in defense of the Revolutionary War in America.

of kinship. *You're turning me into your own creation* (38) Antigone protests and Creon responds:

> *Go home my little playmate. Bury your brother. Don't bother me about him again. The ways of the tree are not to be understood by its leaves. Go home and breed. The kindergartens are empty. The swings are tied up. Not a single sandwich wrapper drifts across a single school-yard. The gulls have given up and gone away. Go home and breed. We need the noise of children like the noise in a stony place* (41).

Mathews, also reads Antigone's myth as synonymous to "nonviolence" and "anti-theatre." In the meta-theatrical gesture of her suicide, Mathews' version reenacts the perpetual occurrence of a vicious circle of barbarism, *a state of total war since the murder of Cain* (51) in which all of us have and will keep on bearing witness to an intolerable horror. The action is set in a quasi-Beckettian no-man's-land: a vaguely post-nuclear location designed as a mass of drying concrete, a wrecked car, graffiti, a dying tree, sand and even a river running through the stage. It could be Stalingrad in 1943, St. Petersburg in 1917, Nagasaki in 1945, post-Criminal Justice Bill Ireland in 1984; any shattered culture. The backdrop of a devastated city is the forum in which all acts of violence and accusation are castigated, a modern civilization in ruins in which everyone else is blamed for one's mistakes. In this visual wasteland where torture is routine, *Antigone*'s scoring propaganda is not the object. Indeed, the question seems to be: can there be martyrs without monsters? Mathews makes the point that there are no monsters, only victims,

only casualties and that "we're all equally guilty or innocent in crisis situations over which we have no control"[17]. Our desire to find a monster is based on our need to take away our own guilt:

> [Director Michael Scott] *had this terrible image of holocaust. But once I started translating I realized that it wouldn't work as we expected. I wasn't writing with conviction because I doubted the premise. It rested on a certain idea of heroism and individual glory. That you couldn't have a martyr without a monster; you couldn't make Antigone without debasing Creon. So, I thought of a play with no culprits and a great deal of casualties*[18].

Consciously moving away from the idea of heroes and villains, this version resists categorization: simultaneously unstable and intact it "expiates," in the writer's words, the "shame" of the primary classical text by subverting "the very notion of a classic"[19]:

> *"Antigone, like all the major tragedies of the Greek canon, exist in cowed form. It has been sedated by its own stature. The harm of its art has been drained from it. As a result, it's suffered a sea-change, a fate worse than death; it has become a classic. There are a great many reasons why this is a shame. For one thing, Antigone subverts the very notion of a classic, if by classic we understand a text which inscribes the meaning of history- and, indeed, the history of meanings- […] Antigone, in fact, is the record of a part of an individual to assent to such practices"*[20].

[17] Mathews, A. 1984b: 8.
[18] Mathews, A. 1984c: 14.
[19] Mathews, A. 1984d: 18.
[20] Ibid.

The way Antigone is portrayed in Mathews' appropriation largely depends on the way she has been read through the ages. Mathews tests these ambiguities and contradictions (*Don't you fuckin' start Sartrin' round the place, a terrible man for the Hegelian Triangle*, *Don't go Antigonizing him*, etc. (12,19,34)) by bridging the dividing line between politics and aesthetics. The world that he constructs around Antigone, is a world of unprecedented fear, loathing and control, verbal and physical abuse, violence, a fluid, almost absurd setting, timeless and space-less. The crux of this telling exchange between desire and violence becomes the central preoccupation in Mathews' theorization of tragedy:

> *Acts of violence may occur offstage in the Greek plays but the fact of violence is usually transparent (and therefore sometimes invisible).Yet the exorbitance of conflict- the immediacy of rows and blows-disguises its more subtle forms, the tactical cohersion of an understated chat, the menace of mere presence[…]I have an interest in the subspecies of violence of masters and models, of the impoverished self prostrating itself at the feet of an idol, of persons who are decentred by their own obsession with other people*[21].

In Mathews' loose adaptation, there is a violent reciprocity, in Girardian terms, modeled around a series of allusions to literary, fictional and historical configurations. In the same vein, the Critic ranks *Antigone* among the "foundation texts of Western culture, one of the flagstones of European achievement," along

[21] Ibid.

with "several later works of the Christian era, notably the *Rule of St.Benedict*, Pico della Mirandola's *On the Dignity of Man*, Thomas a Kempis, Montaigne," Plato's *Republic* and the *Bible*[22]. *Antigone* occupies a liminal space between figuring herself as a hopeless pacifist and *the real public enemy* (13). As Mathews puts it (*pace* the Critic): "the *Antigone* is a beautiful work, full of nobility and human anguish. It portrays the most fundamental spiritual and psychological, sorry, sorry (Giggles) the most psychological dilemmas of the spirit, the terrible confrontation between the conscientiousness of the Law and the law of conscience"[23]. His Creon, like another Solon, outlaws mourning and *criminalize[s] any act of weeping as an incitement to gloom. Weeping must be done at home or in the darkness. And it cannot be loud. Audible gnashing or sighing will be punishable in the same way as silent sobbing* (31)[24]. The multilingual outburst of the Chorus when confronted with *Antigone* and Ismene (*Poly has been fuckin' vamoosed. An dtigeann tu? Verboten, finito, forget it* (13)) in English, Gaelic, German, and Italian, captures the turbulence which history brings to the reach of meaning. Coupled with *Antigone*'s writing of the letter P on the walls and defacing them, the theme of suppression of the freedom of speech and of cultural

[22] Mathews, A. 1984a: 27.

[23] Mathews, A. 1984a: 27.

[24] It is fascinating to observe here that the negation of public lamentation (like in Ancient Greece) as an uncivilized practice became a target of a religious reformation of the Irish communities to the point where the Catholic church persistently opposed and publicly threatened female transgressors with the ultimate of punishments: denunciation and excommunication.

relativity is reminiscent of the linguistic and political suppression in Catholic Ireland. In the light of this, Mathews sees *Antigone* as a scapegoat "*depuis la fondation du monde"* (48) and the theory of scapegoating as the essence of Christianity. In this chaotic cosmic model, violence is inflicted against all those who are *blamed for everything* but are *guilty of nothing* (33), summed up in the apophthegmatic tone of the Chorus: *Where there are sheep, there will be scapegoats* (64).

During German Romanticism, Ludwig Tieck proclaimed that *Antigone* constitutes "the easiest ancient work for a modern Christian audience to understand"[25]. Remediaki, in the light of this pronouncement, interestingly locates *Antigone*'s appeal within a purely theological re-figuration and a Christian ethic typified in the reception of the heroine's stature as a "text-symbol", offering thus itself to various parallelisms: Antigone as Mary Magdalene, the mourner and carer of Jesus body, or as Virgin Mary, the lamenting kin/mother (the parallelism here overtly ironic for virginal Antigone is famously remembered as the childless bride-never-to-be, shunning marriage and procreation by choosing to bury her brother's corpse rather than marry Haemon), and finally Antigone as Jesus himself, the suffering martyr, the scapegoat, who is tried, humiliated, and sent to his death. A religious re-reading of *Antigone* seems particularly appealing for an Irish audience but the most crucial application of its claim

[25] Quoted in Ρεμεδιάκη, I. 2004: 155. The collection of the Conference papers that are published in this book are written in Greek. Translation of references in English is mine.

to Irish life is an unheeded critique of the Catholic church and its implacable rigidity to matters of public and private morale: Mathews' *Antigone* as another Joan of Arc or Calamity Jane, a "smile of a Gandhi, cheek of a Christ" proves that violence is at the heart of every ritual, every human history, every era, and "bloodshed [is] at the bottom of everything" and his treatment of the myth is employed as "a final irritant to those stodgy folk whom weekend radicals love to scapegoat"[26]. Most interestingly, Mathews comments on the historical co-incidence that relates the genesis of tragedy to the first Jewish prophets:

> *"[…] because their shared concern is always and everywhere the nature of violence, whether in its routine form as lynchlaw or in its ritual form as sacrifice, within that frail makeshift we call society"*[27].

The portrayal of Antigone in Mathews is twofold: she is the "quiet protester," the combatant for social Justice, a sort of androgynous Jesus but also enemy of the state, in the eyes of Creon who is Pilate (the crucifixion here transferred to a wooden rocking-chair). In the fragile relationship between mortal and divine, the individual and the state, Mathews develops a truthful re-evaluation of power-politics that applies to Ireland's long history of colonial oppression and violence. Antigone's crime in the eyes of those in power, is the crime that every individual commits in order to

[26] Mathews, A. 1984d: 18.
[27] Ibid.

safeguard family and dignity. This hubristic conflict of visions dramatizes an ethical strife between ancestral piety and civil obedience that has painfully challenged Ireland in the past and it continues to do so. Mathews exemplifies this reality in the conflicting perspectives on scene of inscribing the initial P around the walls of the city, standing for Polyneices and Peteocles:

> *"Antigone knows[…] that her brothers are identical, united by their own rivalry, mirror images of the very difference which divides them; and she knows as well that Creon's version of the history is the old humanitarian perversion of the truth, a stubborn allegiance to the belief that the meta-physical force of Law, not the physical law of Force, determines everything"*[28].

Written throughout in Irish colloquialisms, the play's most radical departure from the original text comes in Antigone's final speech when she addresses the audience:

> *(Chorus attempts to muffle her mouth with his hand. She bites. He strikes her.) Jesus, my nose is bleeding. Stop it please. Tell them. Tell them. They'll come for the woman down the street. Will you tell them then? They'll come for your next door neighbor. Will you tell them then? They'll come for you. And after that, when there's nobody left, they'll come for themselves (58).*

Mathews' message is quite bleak: "*Antigones* don't really exist, but their heroism, small and local, exists in

[28] Ibid.

martial Poland, in Greenham Common, in Argentina, everywhere"[29]. Antigone is lead to her death-finale in a deflated un-heroic ending, cross-examined and accused of *taking the sins of the world on her shoulders* (56) but Heman insists she is still alive and lost somewhere in Kharkov while Mathews establishes her fate as that of an eternal suspect bearing witness to the crimes of the century. The playwright actively encourages the audience to perform rebellion against oppressive and unjust regimes by having the characters prompting them into dissidence and resistance with phrases like *Can't you see that there's no greater crime in this world than having clean hands* (33)? In a Baudelairean fashion, Mathews exposes the voyeurism and the hypocrisy of a passive, apathetic audience and a guilty society: in the end, Ismene and Creon force the audience to leave: *Go home. Go back to your homes. Voyeurs. Peeping Toms. You can't do anything* (65).

[29] 1984a: 4.

Bibliography

Adorno, T. W. (1967), *Prisms*. USA: MIT Press.

Anouilh, J. (2005), *Antigone (La Petite Vermillon)*. London: European Schoolbooks.

Badiou, A. (2007), "The Contemporary Figure of the Soldier in Politics and Poetry" [Online]. Available: http://www.lacan.com/badsold.htm [Accessed 16th March 2010].

Brecht, B. (1984), *Antigone, a version*. Trans. by Holderlin, F. and Malina, J. New York: Applause.

Butler, J. (2000), *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*. USA: Columbia University Press.

Copjec, J. (2004), *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation.* USA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Fleming, K. (2006), "Fascism on Stage: Jean Anouilh's Antigone", in Zajko, V. and Leonard, M. eds., *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist Thought.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 163-186.

Girard, R. (1993), *Violence and the Sacred*. USA: The John Hopkins University Press.

Göethe, J. W. (2005), "Euphrosyne" in Garland, H. B. and Garland, M. eds., *The Oxford Companion to German Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 215.

Gourgouris, S. (2003), *Does Literature Think? Literature as Theory for an Antimythical Era*. California: Stanford University Press.

Hall, E. (2004), "Aeschylus, Race, Class, and War in the 1990s", in Hall, E., Macintosh, F. and Wrigley, A. eds., *Dionysus Since 69: Greek Tragedy at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mathews, A. C. (1984a), "Aidan and Antigone in Athens", *The Irish Press*, July 27th, 4.

Mathews, A. C. (1984b), "Antigone, We'll Hardly Know", *The Irish Press*, July 28th, 8.

Mathews, A. C. (1984c), "Getting Away from Heroes and Villains", *The Irish Independent*, July 29th, 14.

Mathews, A. C. (1984d), "The Antigone", *Theatre Ireland* 7, 18.

Mathews, A. C. (1984e), *The Antigone*, unpublished manuscript. Dublin.

McDonald, M. (2002), "The Irish and Greek Tragedy", in McDonald, M. and Walton, M. eds., *Amid Our Troubles: Irish Versions of Greek Tragedy*. Great Britain: Methuen, 37-86.

Ρεμεδιάκη, Ι. (2004), 'Η Πρώτη Παράσταση της Αντιγόνης στην Ελλάδα και την Γερμανία: Μετάφραση και άλλες Σχέσεις', in Σχέσεις του Νεοελληνικού Θεάτρου με το Ευρωπαϊκό:

Διαδικασίες Πρόσληψης στην Ιστορία της Ελληνικής Δραματουργίας από την Αναγέννηση ως Σήμερα, Παράβασις, Επιστημονικό Δελτίο Τμήματος Θεατρικών Σπουδών Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών, Παράρτημα-Μελετήματα [3] Πρακτικά Β΄ Πανελλήνιου Θεατρολογικού Συνεδρίου Αθήνα:¨Εκδόσεις Ergo

G. Steiner (1984), *Antigones.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

T*he Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*, stereotyped by A.Chandler for the American Bible Society. New York: American Bible Society, 1937), deposited in Harvard Library,1886.

António Pedro's *Antigone* on stage[1]

Susana Marques Pereira
(University of Coimbra)

Throughout the twentieth century Sophocles' *Antigone* was an inspiration to six Portuguese playwrights albeit born at different times and with different personalities[2]. Curiously, four of these plays were written between the 1930s and the 1950s by men[3] during troubled periods in Portuguese politics, and the last two by women[4] in the 1990s. This discrepancy of time as well as the distinction between male and female productions seems somehow reflected in the message prevalent in each of the plays[5]. Men underline political issues by voicing the contemporary political context, as well by the natural connection between man and power (a main element in ancient Greek tragedy too); women on the other hand more emotional by nature (in the same way as in the Classical plays) put the emphasis in

[1] I would like to thank Mr. Júlio Gago, the present director of TEP, for all the information he kindly gave me, as well as for the images that he provided; I would like to thank also Prof. Carlos Morais for his enlightenments about António Pedro's *Antigone* new production in 2003.

[2] Cf. Silva, M. F. 2001: 141-160.

[3] António Sérgio, *Antígona* (1930); Júlio Dantas, *Antígona* (1946); João de Castro Osório, *Antígona* (1954); António Pedro, *Antígona* (1954).

[4] Hélia Correia, *Perdição. Exercício sobre Antígona* (1991); Eduarda Dionísio, *Antes que a Noite Venha* (1992).

[5] João de Castro Osório's *Antigone*, a play not very close to the Sophoclean paradigm, is "a recreation of the myth under a Christian perspective" (Morais, C. 2001a: 9).

the conflict between male and female. So in a period when democracy has already been established in Portugal, issues addressing the family and the role of Antigone as a woman take the priority.

Six years ago, in 2003, the Teatro Experimental do Porto (TEP) included in the commemorations of its 50th anniversary a production of António Pedro's *Antigone*, as a mean of paying homage to the "the most emblematic personality of TEP's history and of the Portuguese theatre of the twentieth century"[6], as referred to by its current director. Their aim was at the same time to show that *Antigone*'s message is a contemporary one, even though the impact of its message had been even greater in Portugal in the1950s whilst under the dictatorial regime during which António Pedro wrote and produced his *Antigone*. In any case the subject of fight for freedom is a message unfortunately still adequate in today's international context.

António Pedro, who would be one hundred years old in 2009, was just a year younger than Karolus Koun, and influenced modern Portuguese theatre in a significant way (like Koun did in Greece). He wrote his own version of *Antigone* which was performed by TEP, the company that was under his artistic direction since 1953. The play was performed in a close by theatre, the Teatro de S. João in Oporto, in front of an audience "made up of the finest citizens that Oporto had at that time", according to the press (cf. Diário de Notícias from 19. 02. 1954).

[6] Gago, J. 2003: VIII.

Writing a play to be performed by non professional actors from TEP[7] meant that he had to pay special attention to the cast, choosing for the main roles actors that would later become a reference in the history of Portuguese stage – like Dalila Rocha (as Antigone) and João Guedes (as Creonte) who acted in the first production of *Antigone*. In 1956 however Dalila Rocha was replaced by another actress, Inês Palma, as she both looked and was younger. Age was an important factor when choosing the actor for the main character. But António Pedro who recognized Dalila Rocha's talent, kept her in the play by changing her role to that of servant Artemísia. He made this character more prominent than the one in the first version by recreating her role in a scene filled with deep emotion (cf. third act) – the servant's hands are shown tinged with the blood of prince Hemon whom she loved dearly.

Both changes clearly illustrate how much attention the artistic director of the TEP put into renovation when staging the play. With António Pedro's productions the role of the stage manager becomes decisive, in line with a growing perception in Europe of the relevance of this role since the beginning of the 20th century[8].

António Pedro's "aesthetical revolution" (as told by the press of his time and more recently during the commemorations of TEP's 50th anniversary) inscribes his theatre in a modern staging characterized by the unity of all the elements associated to a production: from the

[7] TEP became a professional company only since 1957.
[8] Cf. Fischer-Lichte, E. 2008: 27 sqq.

actor's roles to the text, the props, the set design, etc. Before him, performances used to increase the status of some stars. António Pedro however wants his actors to realize that they belong to a team, working together towards the same goals. He calls their attention for the words that have to be emphasized, for the pauses that need to be made, for the right use of their voices, for the need of movement on stage. All these are components that must be developed by the stage manager's work, according to his own conception of theatre.

The attention to costumes is another characteristic of his productions. In a period dominated by political censure, he succeeded in importing Classical Greek atmosphere to the modern Portuguese world, suggesting that many questions put in the past still remain valid. Such is the case of Antigone's protest against tyranny, a symbol of his own opposition to the dictatorial regime enforced in Portugal since 1926 and of the underlying yearn of the Portuguese nation for freedom.

Scenography also underlines the same purposes, since António Pedro checks something that can suggest the global concept of a conventional setting, avoiding too many details in order to give force to the text (cf. picture 1: two ionic columns stand out in the stage)[9].

[9] Sound and light are also considered among António Pedro's innovations: if before the 1950s sounds were usually the result of traditional processes from the stage wings (cf. the sound of the wind, or of the rain), António Pedro profits from innovative studies about sound and gathers around him some of the best sound technicians in Portugal, like Carlos Fraga, from the National Radio (Emissora Nacional Portuguesa).

Light, on the other hand, served by projectors, was a way to

António Pedro tried hard to attract the enthusiasm of the Portuguese audience towards classical tragedy plays. In his prologue he gives the audience many indications about the conventions he is using: the traditional royal blood of the characters taken from classical tragedy; the introduction of a new character (Artemísia) because "it is decorative and it fits well in a bourgeois comedy", so that a modern audience can understand the real aims of the production and establish an effective connection with it. His is a text to be performed for a specific society, underlining specific messages adjusted to modern times while metaphorically raising questions put by contemporary life.

This prologue is original and very expressive suggesting that António Pedro knew well the European theatre of his time[10]. It is surprising to see a stage manager able to establish a functional dialogue with an electrician and a chief engineer, three technical supporters, and at the same time also with some characters of the play itself, like the old men of the Chorus, or the servant Artemísia. The latter being a figure unfamiliar to those who knew the Sophoclean archetype, a kind of "projection of the spectator"[11] who adds an interesting human touch to

give unity to the performance, and not only a mean of general illumination, underlining for example the sequence of day and night. "Ordering the sky to be lit up is something amazing! More, give it more light. We are in Greece, where the sky has no clouds", the stage manager says expressively to the electrician in the prologue.

[10] About Pirandello's influence over António Pedro, cf. Morais, C. 2001b: 94-96.

[11] Rodrigues, U. T. (1961), *Noites de Teatro*. Lisboa.

the action. In António Pedro's production, unlike in a classic Greek tragedy, technical indications about the performance are mixed with the account of the intrigue's background and its characters thus connecting reality and illusion in an involving way. In the prologue, one of the three old men from the Chorus summarizes the message of the play: this is a "tragedy of freedom". This announcement is very significant in the Portuguese context of that time, susceptible of political censure, censorship, but well shielded by the general remission of the play to Sophoclean tragedy.

"Ismene and Antigone represent two different ways of enduring tyranny", says the stage manager in the prologue. The decision to bury Polinices signals some kind of madness, according to Ismene, because it disrespects Creon's edict; for Antigone on the contrary it is a challenge based on legitimacy.

-"What can we do against men's law, against those who have the strength we are deprived of"? - Ismene asks Antigone, depicting her fragility, her impotence against male and institutional power; fear made her accommodated to it in the same way that the Portuguese society was to Salazar's authoritarian regime for a long part of the twentieth century.

Antigone's attitude however proves that it is possible to resist to tyrannical male power, even if the cost of freedom is her own life. Her determination is particularly important in a country dominated by a dictatorship for almost five decades, in a society where the woman's role is still irrelevant – and it expresses

the urgency of fighting for freedom. Antigone doesn't give up because, as the stage manager asserted in the prologue, "men fight for what they love".

Freedom is a key word in António Pedro's *Antigone* not only for the message it conveys but also for the innovation of its aesthetical, structural and functional aspects without losing sight of the Sophoclean paradigm, as C. Morais observes[12].

Antigone performance by TEP's actors received a huge applause from the audience and the press of that time, a success well corroborated by the successive performances in other Portuguese towns (e. g. Braga, Coimbra, Lisbon).

Norberto Barroca, TEP's current artistic director, staged António Pedro's *Antigone* in 2003 at the Auditório Municipal de Vila Nova de Gaia. He tried to convey to a modern audience the essence of the message of his antecessor's adaptation and in order to achieve that, he used the original text as well as Augusto Gomes' models, created for the second performance of António Pedro's *Antigone* in 1956. "Everything else is modern"[13], from scenography to light, though still preserving the general classical atmosphere in his homage to António Pedro (cf. picture 2). Norberto Barroca had naturally more technical means at his disposal, such as the possibility of using the sub-stage from where he appears, dressed in a modern suit, assuming the role of the stage manager that he plays in this performance[14].

[12] 2001a: 11 and 2001b: 93-94.
[13] Gago, J. 2003: VIII.
[14] Norberto Barroca also plays Creon's role in this performance.

It was a well achieved production on the whole, deserving Susana Sá's performance as Antigone a special mention (cf. picture 3), "for the adequate use of her voice, for her suitable gesture, for the dramatic intensity that she got with her interventions"[15]; also good was the Chorus' performance, "for the clarity of its elocutions, for the way it moved on stage and its use of silences"[16].

Based on an everlasting play from the fifth century B.C. the performances of António Pedro's *Antigone* illustrate how "Greece may be no more than a scenic pretext. The plot really takes place on an intimate stage i.e. in each person's imagination"[17], gaining real time and surpassing physical space, inviting a renovated audience to renovated ways of making theatre.

Picture 1 - Anonymous photo from the play *Antigone* written by António Pedro and staged by TEP in 1954.

[15] Morais, C. 2004: 42.
[16] Morais, C. 2004: 42.
[17] António Pedro in a note before beginning his play.

Picture 2 - Photo taken by José Martins from the play *Antigone* written by António Pedro and staged in 2003 under the direction of Norberto Barroca.

Picture 3 - Photo taken in 2003 by José Martins from the play *Antigone* written by António Pedro and staged under the artistic direction of Norberto Barroca. Susana Sá plays Antigone and Norberto Barroca plays Creon.

Bibliography

Fischer-Lichte, E. (2008), "Transformations of Ancient Greek Theatre", in *Exploring European Identities/ Ideologies by means of (Re)Presentations of Ancient Greek Drama*. Epidavros, 27-32.

Fraisse, S. (1974), *Le Mythe d'Antigone*. Paris.

Gago, J. (2003), Suplemento d'*O Primeiro de Janeiro*, 25 de Maio, p. VIII.

Genot, G. (1970), *Pirandello*. Paris 1970.

Morais, C. (2001a), "Antígona, a Resistente, a Mártir, a Mulher", in *Máscaras Portuguesas de Antígona – Ágora*, Suplemento 1. Aveiro, 7-12.

Morais, C. (2001b), "A Antígona de António Pedro: Liberdades de uma Glosa", in *Máscaras Portuguesas de Antígona – Ágora*-Suplemento 1. Aveiro, 85-101.

Morais, C. (2004), "António Pedro, Antígona: Glosa da Nova Tragédia de Sófocles", in *Representações de Teatro Clássico no Portugal Contemporâneo* – III. Coimbra, 41-43.

Porto, C. (1997), *O TEP e o Teatro em Portugal. Histórias e Imagens*. Porto.

Silva, M. F. (2001), "Antígona breve – Eduarda Dionísio, *Antes que a Noite Venha*", in *Máscaras Portuguesas de Antígona – Ágora*-Suplemento 1. Aveiro, 141-160.

Steiner, G. (2008, 2ª ed.), *Antígonas* (trad. port.). Lisboa.

Wiles, D. (2000), *Greek Theatre Performance: an Introduction*. Cambridge.

Sophocles' *Electra* by Krzysztof Warlikowski: transgression of the hero

Krystyna Mogilnicka
(Charles University, Prague)

Talking about *Electra* – the performance made by Krzysztof Warlikowski in 1997 – is a matter of reconstruction, because it is not played any more and the video recording does not exist. The performance opens the perspective on two personalities of Polish theatre, who – inspired by ancient drama and by the character of Electra in this particular case – were able to talk about the contemporaneity in transition, about the absurd of living with the silent Gods, about the old rituals – full and empty in the same time, and, last but not least, about the post-catholic future of Poland…

The first of those personalities is Krzysztof Warlikowski (born in 1962) – nowadays one of the most interesting, world-known and successful Polish directors of the dramatic theatre (for example in 2008 he received the *New Theatrical Reality Award*). He is known for staging the non-Polish dramas and he is very often staging the classics like Shakespeare. In his early career he was learning from and working with Peter Stein, Peter Brook, Ingmar Bergman, Giorgio Strehler and some of the great Polish directors like Krzysztof Lupa or Jerzy Grzegorzewski. From the very beginning he was also staging abroad, mainly in Germany.

Electra was his seventh performance. It was his first staging of the ancient tragedy. Critics found it full of

quotations from his masters (like a male chorus dressed in suits and hats in the prologue of the performance, a quotation from Peter Stein's *Oresteia*) and kept repeating that it looked like the German theatre full of blood, cruelty and cold distance[1]. But one of the critics, Maciej Nowak – nowadays the director of Theatre Institute in Poland – saw the première of *Electra* as a very special event. At the exact day of the première another performance of the other young director took place – Grzegorz Jarzyna was staging the *Tropical Madness*, a play by Witkacy, the avant-garde Polish artist and writer. Nowak saw that day as the dawn of the new theatre in Poland – he called his article *We, the new theatre*! And concerning *Electra*, he wrote that Polish theater had started a dialogue with the Western theatre[2].

In the career of Warlikowski *Electra* is a kind of transgressive performance, because just after *Electra* his performances started to be critically acclaimed as masterpieces and the artistic phenomenon of Warlikowski had begun. The phenomenon based on transgressions of the body, sexuality, catholic rituals (like marriage – Warlikowski's favorite one) as empty and de-sacrificed ones… The period after *Electra* was called *Extra Ecclesiam* by Grzegorz Niziołek, the author of a monograph about Warlikowski[3]. *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* is a Latin phrase which means: *Outside the Church there is No Salvation*. To conclude, with

[1] Węgrzyniak, R. 1997, Wakar, J. 1997, Gruszczyński, P. 1997, Drewniak, Ł. 2007.

[2] Nowak, M. 2005.

[3] Niziolek, G. 2008.

Electra we are just approaching this period. And Electra as a heroine is the perfect example for describing the favorite characters of Warlikowski. The play itself shows spectrum of Warlikowski's themes. The other critic, Jacek Wakar, many years after the première of *Electra* said that if *Electra* had been staged later, it would have been the same success in the eyes of Warlikowski's admirers as the productions that came afterwards[4].

The second personality mentioned at the beginning is Jan Kott, the critic and theorician of the theatre, known especially for his interpretations of Shakespeare. Kott and his book about the ancient tragedy[5] was the most significant inspiration for reading Sophocles by Warlikowski. In the leaflet from the Warsaw performance two main inspirations for *Electra* are mentioned – Jan Kott and the Balkan war.

Warlikowski said that he did *Electra* because of the war in former Yugoslavia; he did it as a reaction, but for Polish society it was a dead subject at that time – critics wrote only about "the war we can always see in TV" or about the Balkan folklore, used by the director to make his performance more attractive for the audience[6]. It was a complete misunderstanding and Warlikowski never made such a clear connection between reality and his performance again.

In *Electra* the female chorus looks just like the women from the documentary photo in the leaflet

[4] Wakar, J. 2008.

[5] Kott 1973.

[6] Kowalczyk, J. R. 1997, Wyżyńska, D. 1997, Gruszczyński, P. 1997, Goźliński, P. 1997, Jasiński, J. 1997.

from the Warsaw performance, the photo from the funeral of 28 years old Haxhi Osmanaj, the emigrant from Offenbach killed by Serbians. We can read there: "As a dead man he came back to his house in Kosovo, where, according to the Islamic ritual, he had been wept for hours by the women", by the women with white headscarves on their heads, dressed in simple black dresses with long sleeves. Kott in his book wrote that the chorus in *Electra* behaves like scared village women. And this is the photo of scared village women praying for their men involved in war. In the leaflet there are few direct quotations from the Kott's book – for example the one saying that *Electra* of Sophocles is the cruelest of the ancient tragedies.

Electra as a heroine of the performance is a transgressive heroine – she is not a character with psychological meaning, she is a figure in the situation. Kott at the begining of his book says that the time of this tragedy is *praesens*. The characters are described by the past tense, which defines them, and there is a future ahead of them, the future which is already defined. This means that the situation is important, not the character itself. The performance of Warlikowski starts with the scene where Electra is standing on a bed in front of the audience, saying words quoting Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, describing the story of her family in her monologue. Towards the back of the stage, the doors are opening again and again and we can see three murderers standing behind them – it is the past tense which describes Electra. The last murderer is Clytemnestra dressed

in red, stabbing a white bathtub with a knife. Kott is describing Electra as a stubborn memory. The constant presence of the past and the presage of the revenge – the revenge is the future, which is already defined.

The chorus, called by critics the Weepers, is singing in ancient Greek (which was completely obscure for Polish audience) and it moves with a complicated, ceremonial choreography, making gestures connected by critics with sacrificial rituals[7] – the religious context comes to the mind. This is the logical context for Electra, who is the deeply involved in the religious order.

Kott, writing about the myth, is building a parallel between Electra and Hamlet – they are both in the same situation – when their fathers were killed by the new lovers of their mothers and were taking the place in the king's bedroom and on the throne, all in their own house, in front of their eyes. The situation alienates them from the society and their sexuality. They both preoccupy their minds with death, spending their time speaking. Both are devoted to the father, closed in their hatred.

Kott's parallel between the myth and Shakespeare's drama is a bit more complicated, mainly because of the gender transgression – Electra is Ophelia at the same time or Ophelia is Electra, who chooses a suicide… In her *praesens* Electra has only two possibilities, two choices to keep the moral (religious) order of the world and her own honor: one is to say no to the world, say

[7] Pawłowski, R. 1997, Jasiński, J. 1997, Węgrzyniak, R. 1997, Schiller, A. 1997.

that it is absurd to live in a changed order, which leads her to committing suicide, and the other is to try to bring the order back – which means a murder in this case. Women, according to Kott, are in the tragedies of Sophocles the incarnation of *sacrum* (Antigone is also a perfect example) – they are devoted to the dead, loyal to and fascinated by them.

Electra in order not to commit suicide needs Orestes, the male. And Orestes, in Kott's parallel, is also Hamlet (one critic of Warlikowski's performance mentioned that the actor playing Orestes, Mariusz Bonaszewski, was portraying Hamlet in his previous play and that his style of acting is very much the same as in the Shakespearean performance[8]). As Kott wrote, Electra is a psychological motivation of Orestes, and she is inciting him against the mother. Together they can rectify the world by the gesture – murder of the mother and her lover. In Kott's interpretation of Sophocles, if life is a failure the last gesture bears the only importance which can give any sense at all to that failure. The gesture can break the *praesens.* Orestes is a sword, Electra is a need – the humiliated one, howling with humiliation. The woman, according to Kott's way of understanding the ancient tragedy, is dealing with sexuality and is not able to kill while the man is the one who is killing.

Kott also says that even if Sophocles was always perceived by philologists as the embodiment of the theatre made of marble (a metaphor for the classical values), the theatre of the dignity and devotion, the real

[8] Jasiński, J. 1997.

Sophocles on stage shows the theatre of humanity where the characters are yelling, howling and screaming… Some reactions to Warlikowski's performance mentioned that the screams of Danuta Stenka, the actress playing Electra, were too loud, unbearable and nearly unintelligible[9].

Kott said much about the specific relation between Electra and Orestes, the divine siblings evoking the incest taboo. They are a couple both as siblings and as lovers. Their last gesture is for them also the way to unite, to "marry" in a way, "marry" by the bloodshed. Blood connote killing, but also sexuality. Electra is much more than mother for Orestes, she is much more than caregiver and sister. Killing the mother and her lover is the substitute for sexual intercourse between the siblings.

The end of the tragedy, Kott says, forms the situation of emptiness – just after the chorus says the average moral instruction and leaves the stage, the brother and the sister stay alone with the two dead bodies – with no punishment and no praise from Gods, with no reaction. The revenge in the end was just the next murder in a row. Gods are silent and what comes after the last gesture is absurd. They are aliens, strangers – *deinotaton* – in a city and for each other. They were deceived by Gods and by the people; with the revenge they lost their sense of living, they are mute. The dead are eating the living ones in Kott's interpretation of the ancient tragedy and in the Balkan war, which 'we can see on TV'. The siblings after the murder are mute, like in

[9] Grabowska, D. 1997, Wakar, J. 1997.

Kott's interpretation, but the difference is that Orestes in Warlikowski's performance leaves the stage with the olive-branch in his hand.

Electra, according to all these interpretations, opens the main themes and pictures of Warlikowski's theatre: a marriage which is not a marriage; heroes who are losers and outsiders; social ties which are dysfunctional; the sexual behavior of characters which is not obvious. Grzegorz Niziołek who called this period *Extra Ecclesiam* used to define Warlikowski's theatre as a theatre of melancholy, theatre which deals with the overwork of guilt and of being a stranger, the overwork of mourning.

The dead are eating the living – it is the situation portrayed by the ancient tragedy and the Balkan war. The parallel of the revenge is obvious. Maybe it was too obvious for the audience, so that it forgot about it after the first moment it was expressed, enjoying nice oriental music (clarinet, flute and percussion), nice choreography, nice black, red and white colors of costumes, simple "ancient-like" stage design and the new translation done specially for this show.

Bibliography

Drewniak, Ł. (2007), "Serce w celofanie", *Przekrój* 6/ 08, 8 February, [Online] Polish Theatre Vortal. Available: http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/35058.html [Accessed 6th April 2009].

Goźliński, P. (1997), "Problematyczna Bałkan Elektra", *Życie* 18, 22 January [Online] Polish Theatre Vortal. Available: http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/19816.html [Accessed 6th April 2009].

Grabowska, D. (1997), "Elektra uwspółcześniona", *Przekrój* 12, 23 March, [Online] Polish Theatre Vortal. Available: http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/19772.html [Accessed 6th April 2009].

Gruszczyński, P. (1997), "W poszukiwaniu własnego języka", *Tygodnik Powszechny* 6, 9 February, [Online] Polish Theatre Vortal. Available: http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/19812.html [Accessed 6th April 2009].

Jasiński, J. (1997), "Samotność Elektry", *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 5, 9 February, [Online] Polish Theatre Vortal. Available: http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/19813.html [Accessed 6th April 2009].

Kott, J. (1973), *The Eating of the Gods. An Interpretation of Greek Tragedy*. New York: Random House.

Kowalczyk, J. R. (1997), "Jatki w pełnym świetle", *Rzeczypospolita* 17, 21 January, [Online] Polish

Theatre Vortal. Available: http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/19840.html [Accessed 6th April 2009].

Niziołek, G. (2008), *Warlikowski. Extra Ecclesiam*. Kraków: Homini.

Nowak, M. (2005), "My, czyli nowy teatr", *Notatnik teatralny* 35/ 04, 28 January, [Online] Polish Theatre Vortal. Available: http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/8314.html [Accessed 6th April 2009].

Pawłowski, R. (1997), "Pani zabiła pana", *Gazeta Wyborcza* 18, 22 January, [Online] Polish Theatre Vortal. Available: http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/19774.html [Accessed 6th April 2009].

Schiller, A. (1997), "Potęga nienawiści", *Sztandar Młodych* 16, 23 January, [Online] Polish Theatre Vortal. Available: http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/19809.html [Accessed 6th April 2009].

Wakar, J. (2007), "Dzisiejsze *fatum*", *Życie Warszawy* 16, 20 January, [Online] Polish Theatre Vortal. Available: http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/19847.html [Accessed 6th April 2009].

Wakar, J. (2008), "Z reżysera dyrektor", *Dziennik* 68, 7 September, [Online] Polish Theatre Vortal. Available: http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/27757.html [Accessed 6th April 2009].

Węgrzyniak, R. (1997), "Czystka w Argos", *Odra* 5, 1 May, [Online] Polish Theatre Vortal. Available:

http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/19769.html [Accessed 6th April 2009].

Wyżyńska, D. (1997), "Ekstrema", *Gazeta Wyborcza – Gazeta Stołeczna* 14, 17 January, [Online] Polish Theatre Vortal. Available: http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/19814.html [Accessed 6 April 2009].

Medea's Sacrifice and the unsatisfied director: Euripides' *Medea* by Anatoli Vassiliev

Anastasia Merkouri
(University of Athens)

This paper aims to discuss Euripides' *Medea* directed by Anatoli Vassiliev and performed in Greece in August 2008. His stage direction dealt with Greek tragedy through the perspective of modernity. The director challenged established ways of representing Ancient Greek Drama and the production was considered controversial.

Modernity through Globality

The performance toured several Greek cities (Athens, Epidavros, Sparta, Olympia, Kavala, Patras, Thessaloniki, etc). The première was on the 15th of August at the ancient theatre of Epidavros as part of the Hellenic Festival. Anatoli Vassiliev, Russian director who lives in France, had been invited by the Regional and Municipal Theatre of Patras and the Hellenic Festival to direct Euripides' *Medea*.

Euripides' *Medea* was Vassiliev's first attempt to engage with Ancient Greek Drama, after his successful production of *Medea's Material* by H. Müller. He chose Euripides' play to convey the universal message of Tragedy through the combination of myths and ideas, the clash of current cultures and the metaphysics in the era of globalization. *Polis* now is the whole world. *Medea*

for Vassiliev is a Mediterranean epic[1], the meeting of two worlds (East and West) that clash[2], and the new model of relationships (Jason-Medea)[3]. In the director's staging the destructive meeting of new and old modes of being takes place.

Vassiliev focuses on the notions, the ideas of things, not just their representations. The play is a field where philosophy and metaphysics coexist with human figures[4]. The director is very interested in the philosophical, psychological and metaphysical aspect of Tragedy without ignoring its implementation in the present. His intention seems to be to deal with archetypical figures in the modern world. He quotes the Russian actor Igor Yatsko "psychological theatre deals with human relationships whereas Theatre of the Ideas deals with the relation among ideas"[5]. Vassiliev tries to create the field of metaphysics that could host myths, ideas and gods[6].

[1] Loverdou, M. 2008b.

[2] Vidalis, G. 2008b. To clarify his point Lydia Koniordou gave this example. "Today terrorist attacks by terrorists from Arabic countries are acts of self sacrifice whereas Western countries characterize them as terrorism". That means there are two cultures not being able to communicate.

[3] Vassiliev maintains the idea that Jason wanted to help Medea. His concern was their children's interest. He tries to adapt to a new form of relationship, more flexible, a new kind of marriage (quote of Lydia Koniordou in Marinou, E. 2008b).

[4] Performance program, 48.

[5] Performance program, 48. After having focused his work for a long time on energies and metaphysics, Vassiliev is still not able to define what the "energy of the invisible world" is. But he is convinced that he has to stick to ideas/notions of things, in order to reveal Tragedy's philosophical aspects. That is why Platonic work is crucial to his research and actor training.

[6] Vassiliev declares himself to be a Christian Orthodox. He goes

He also embraces the ludicrous element in Tragedy because of its connection to Dionysian festivities. He quotes Plato's *Symposium* "The true poet has to be tragic and comic poet altogether. He has to embrace tragedy and comedy as it happens in life" (Plato, *Symposium* 223d). He is aware, though, that his work will not always be well received. So, he will accept any audience response.

Modernity staged

According to L. Hardwick "identity issues are 'marked' in the language(s) used, the idiom (vernacular), the costumes and properties, the set design and the music and soundscape"[7]. From this point of view let us now see how Vassiliev transcribed Euripides' *Medea* on stage.

He chose a Spanish arena to set the play. Everything was painted red, the color of the feast[8], such as the wooden walls around the orchestra, the wooden poles, and the background wooden wall. There was also reddish cork on the floor. A metallic cart with a bull's head (archetypical male symbol) at the wheel was driven by a technician before and during the performance. Chairs (including an orange plastic one on the cart)

back to Russian theatrical tradition, which is almost attached to the religious.

[7] Hardwick, L. 2009: 88.

[8] According to Vassiliev everything in Greek Tragedy originates from the festive mood of Dionysian mysteries. Everything happens in the context of a festive activity, even the most dramatic moments (Loverdou, M. 2008a). So, he places Medea's vengeful plans on a sunny day of feast.

were used by the Chorus and the protagonists during their dialogues, and a table was used as an altar where Medea sacrificed her children. The actors used several props, such as a canister, dolls-dummies/children, a metal crown, metal snakes etc. A metal sun was moving throughout the performance showing the unity of time.

The black and white costumes of the Chorus were influenced by Balkan traditions. Medea was dressed in black and red. There were allusions of the past of the Mediterranean cultures and of Medea's passionate and deadly figure. The Chorus' costumes were designed to serve the intensive movement of the choreography. The actors impersonating Medea's children used masks, until the moment of the filicide.

Music was especially composed for the production in an attempt to combine the present with the past, East and West. The director wanted it to be based on *rebetiko* music, that was born by the meeting of musicians-refugees who came to Greece from Asia Minor in 1922 and the Greek *bouzouki* players. *Rebetiko* is live music tradition in Greece today[9]. Traditional eastern and Greek instruments, e.g. *bouzouki, laouto*, etc. were used by a large *rebetiko* orchestra (15 musicians and actors). A very intense moment was Medea entering the stage singing an *amané*[10].

[9] Vidalis, G. 2008a: performance program, 43.

[10] *Amané* is a song of eastern origin related to pain. It is mostly based on musical improvisation and it is used to narrate the story or the misfortunes of the person who sings it. The music of the performance was a fine piece of work in itself. Some of the joyful

The play's choreography was influenced by Japanese martial arts and Eastern techniques, based on the energy zones of the human body. There were references to mythic themes, such as the battle of the Titans and the Gods[11]. There was excessive, almost continuous dance by the Chorus and movement by the actors. The stripped costumes of the Chorus and the draped ones of the male actors put stress on the movement giving the impression of a fierce flow and of anxiety.

One directorial innovation by Vassiliev was, amongst others, the implementation of a male Chorus consisting of musicians and actors, who was on Medea's side singing about her past and present and cheering about her triumphant plans over the King and Jason. The director invented this Chorus to grand autonomy to Medea's stories from the past and to connect both sides of the story: grief for the filicide and joy for the triumph. On the contrary, the female Chorus mostly recited, implying the epic character of Vassiliev's *mise-en-scène*.

Some other innovations were:

- The extended duration of the performance (3, 5 hours)[12].

---

rhythms of *rebetiko* though clashed with the dramatic tension of some scenes. Moreover, *rebetiko* is closely connected to everyday life entertainment in Greece.

[11] Payatakis, S. 2008.

[12] The performance the following night in Sparta lasted less than 3 hours. The actors did not use fragmented speech, technicians' presence on stage was more discrete, the cart-chariot was not dragging the children's corpses, there was no decomposition of Argo

- The use of space: Vassiliev chose to close an open theatre by adding walls restricting at times the audience's view of the orchestra. He also "dislocated" the play from the *oikos* in Korinthos to an arena in Spain altering basic interpretation indexes. Medea can be anywhere, in the arena of the world, in any *polis*, in constant fight with hostile surroundings. She triumphs not only over *oikos* or the city but over the globe.

- The use of fragmented speech was an attempt to decompose words, re-invent the language and express emotions in a physical, non-verbal way[13].

- The Messenger's trilingual speech, which attempted to increase dramatic tension through confusion (in Greek, English and French by the Messenger and two actors of the Chorus) pointed out that the news spread around the world, that Tragedy has a global message[14]. The spotlight that was brought on stage just for this scene symbolized the omnipresence of the Media in the modern world.

- Medea's (bull) fight with Jason, a symbol of their relationship, of the battle between the two sexes, between two cultures, two equal worlds.

- The scene with Aegeas offered the audience

---

and the Messenger's speech was delivered only in Greek (Farazi, C. 2008: 38). All these changes indicate that Vassiliev perceived what the audience thought was extreme and annoying.

[13] "*Vassiliev's viewpoint of Medea*", review, *Kathimerini* (2008), 12 August. When used in *Medea's Material* fragmented speech was a very eloquent example of a non-verbal expression, which didn't work in a three and a half hour production.

[14] In one of his interviews Vassiliev stated that since we all experience globalization, we should understand that theatre does not constitute a national case any longer (Loverdou, M. 2008a).

the other aspect of human life, that of lightness and comedy. A somehow naïve Aegeas needed advice from the wise Medea being at the same time entirely out of the gloomy atmosphere of her misfortunes.

- Medea poisoned on stage the robe for Creusa using snakes that were hanging around her waist and hammered on stage a metal crown for the princess. The sound accompanied by music and movement created a very strong effect.

- Medea killed her children on stage using the dolls/dummies. She sacrificed them in the altar-table at the centre of the stage "sacrificing" herself at the same time[15]. And then she dragged their corpses around the orchestra.

- Medea's triumphant exit: she left the real world, the stage-arena, moving to another dimension taking her children alive with her. She did so by using the metal cart with the omnipresent Mediterranean plastic chair and a balloon full of hellion gas reminiscent of Helios/ Sun[16]. Vassiliev stresses on the metaphysical aspect of the play, of the two dimensions of life: human life on earth and the "ascent" to the higher dimension, that

[15] Vidalis, G. 2008c.

[16] This was probably meant to stress the comic side of life or it was presumably a remark on how ideas when embodied in the real world lose their significance and become useful but cheap objects. The ludicrous and joyful background at times subverted, or even undermined the dramatic tension of some scenes. The circus atmosphere was not always consistent with the text. Vassilis Nikolaidis, director, in his review opposes to that view. He claims that Vassiliev was right in placing the play in a light circus atmosphere, thus denying the gloomy side of the play (Nikolaidis, V. 2008).

of gods and myths, where Medea triumphs and dead children play happily with their mother.

- The Chorus "buried" Jason at the orchestra and decomposed Argo over his body signifying the bitter end of Jason's adventures.

To sum up, Vassiliev did not seem to abide by the rules of Tragedy, rules he claimed to respect. He said: "When one breaks the rules (of Tragedy), then the substance of Tragedy itself is destroyed"[17].

Actors' training and method

Vassiliev's performative code is based on Socratic ignorance[18]. Through experimentation and research he decomposes and recomposes Stanislavski's method of actor training. In his études, he fully supports actors' improvisations, which are mostly based on personal experience. Then, together with his actors, he uses these personal moments for the production. According to the director, "An actor is wrapped by mystery. Can the actor pretend to be a natural figure in a mythical universe? Acting is the art of authenticity. In a play, which is a myth in itself, actors must be authentic"[19].

By avoiding articulated speech, Vassiliev insists on physical theatre techniques and the way they underpin non - verbal expression of either ideas or emotions. By creating a spectacle-étude based on personal experience and authenticity, he gives the actors the chance to

[17] Loverdou, M. 2008a. That means that there is communication between actors and spectators, even a clashing one.

[18] Marinou, E. 2008a.

[19] Samara, Z. 2000 and performance program, 37.

communicate with the audience[20].

One reads in the performance program:

"In general, it can be admitted that Anatoli Vassiliev is working basically on two key components as regards his stage direction and education activities: a sensitivity infused with a small dose of surrealism (psychological structures/elements which to a great extend are found in his research on Chekhov) and a metaphysical element (i.e. elements of a game which are set off through the performances based on Plato's dialogues). Recently though he introduced the element of vital energy and the strength of pure speech. The result is a psychological and metaphysical drama, which is the same at the mystery theatre"[21].

He and his actors try to transform parts of Platonic dialogues into acting through improvisations[22].

Vassiliev in his book *Sept ou huit leçons de théâtre* wrote that he is never satisfied in his everyday work with his actors. There is a hard road which starts from the cause and ends up to the effect, where the actors should head to with the help of the director. So, a director has to experiment constantly and to change his method. He compares his work to a small ladder next to a big one, that of the Truth. Whenever he makes an achievement, he is not happy because what he achieved was cheap compared to the Truth. He says "When I compare my small ladder with the Truth, I feel I'm nothing, I am not

[20] Samara, Z. 2000; Georgousopoulos, K. 2008.

[21] Vassiliev, A. (1999), *Sept ou huit leçons de théâtre*. Paris: Editions P.O.L.; performance program, 69.

[22] Kirikou, T. 2000.

talented, I am into deep sin. I have to do something to climb high. So, I change my method again. The idea of theatre remains, but the method is changing. The road seems straight but there is always evolution"[23].

Audience reception

Vassiliev's directorial choices made the production rather unclear about its *mise-en-scène.* The director's major points didn't seem to be clear enough and the audience was puzzled by a plethora of images. Most of the audience was confused about the spectacle they had just watched[24]. Some felt shocked and shouted at the actors during the performance; others left the theatre in the middle of the performance stating their annoyance loudly.

For many years now there has been a general discussion about the audience's right to express its disagreement in a more or less fierce way[25]. The critic Eleni Varopoulou has mentioned that hooting "happens when the audience's political and ethical taboos, the aesthetic beliefs are attacked or when their consensus on theatrical morality is hurt at specific time and place". And she continues "Sometimes a theatre scandal is due to ethical, religious and political reasons, although an aesthetic conflict might be found underneath". She also mentions

[23] Performance program, 51.

[24] There are many newspaper reviews which describe and interpret audiences' responses. One can consult the following texts: Varopoulou, E. 1997, Loverdou, M. 1997, Georgousopoulos, K. 1999, Sarigiannis, G. 2008a, "Epidaurus", Georgakopoulou, V., Karouzakis, G., Barka, F., Papaioannou, C., Chatziantoniou, N. 2008, Chatziantoniou, N. 2008, Angelikopoulos, V. 2008a.

[25] Barka, F. 2008.

ideological confrontations and deeper motives as possible reasons; or even organized groups of spectators who intend to attack the director and/or the performance[26].

In my view she encapsulates the reasons accurately[27]. People usually welcome modern performances as long as the stage direction is not excessively innovative[28], or provocative or narcissistic[29]. Some Greek directors have pointed out in the past that disapproval might be an act of despair or a reaction to innovation or an act of political, social or religious confrontation or just the fear in the face of a new order of things in theatre and in society, which is unfamiliar to the audience so far[30].

In our case I think it was a matter of lack of criteria, and a matter of identity and of blurred directorial intentions. The Greek audience is not accustomed to interpretation of Ancient Drama through modernity, although the last two decades there have been some innovative productions[31]. Lorna Hardwick mentions the

---

[26] Varopoulou, E. 1997.

[27] A part of the Greek audience and some Greek artists still believe that Ancient Greek Drama must be staged strictly traditionally in order for the text to be respected and its messages to be conveyed. Some consider any modern representations of Greek Drama insulting. They take it as a matter of national pride. Ancient Greek Drama is thought to be a genre familiar only to the Greeks. So, foreign artists lack the cultural familiarity to stage it effectively. Performance history though shows that Greek audiences have welcomed the work of a number of non-Greek directors. Georgousopoulos, K. 1997, he sums up many productions that brought modernity to Greek stagings.

[28] Chatziantoniou, N. 2008.

[29] Varopoulou, E. 1997.

[30] Loverdou, M. 1997.

[31] Sarigiannis, G, Thedorakopoulos, P. 2008b, Loverdou, M.

"knowledgeable" or "informed" vs the "uninformed" audience"[32] especially when it comes to plays closely related to national identity. The Greek audience is not "trained" to watch modern productions of Greek Tragedy, and to evaluate them accordingly.

There is also the issue of identity. Over the past decades we have all been experiencing a shift of circumstances in various aspects of our lives[33]. In times of transition and uncertainty we all look for what is unchangeable and universal. Tragedy fulfills these requirements. It deals with changing and clashing identities. The ruler becomes a follower, the winner becomes defeated, the bearer of life gives death, gods become humans etc. This is the point where modernization emerges to fill the gap between universality and everyday life.

In the case of *Medea* discussed here, the director tried to raise identity issues in a globalized world. He sacrificed the text and many of its issues in an attempt to relate the performance to contemporary reality[34]. Vassiliev did not seem to realize that although most of the different elements he used were recognizable (elements from different Mediterranean cultures, symbols, costumes, and music) the final image still remained a puzzle to the spectators, especially as far as the different elements'

2008c, Ioannidis, G. 2008.

[32] Hardwick, L. 2009: 91

[33] Fischer-Lichte, E. 2008: 29 describes our time "We know where we come from; we know who we were. But we are not sure where we are heading […] It is a time that destabilizes all our identities, whether individual, gender-related, regional, ethnic, national, religious, or cultural. We are permanently in search of new identities".

[34] Fischer-Lichte, E. 2008: 31.

combination is concerned. His way of thinking and his constant experimentation were clearly depicted in his *mise-en-scène*. He added new elements and attempted to combine themes sometimes irrelevant to each other or to the *mise-en-scène* altogether. However, it looked as if he was never satisfied with the result of his research.

Moreover, he made his point in a very explicit and sometimes harsh way (even brutally naturalistic at times)[35]. When a play, which deals among others with violence and cruelty, is staged on realistic terms, it may not be easy to be tolerated. The outcome was very confusing for the audience unless someone was very familiar with the director's work and method. The audience's aesthetic and sometimes ideological standards were repeatedly challenged[36]. The hooting came as a "revenge to the performance"[37].

So, numerous directorial devices, fragmented views of the present and the past and various elements of tradition unconnected to each other forced to the Greek audience identities, which they did not seem to have been able to recognize as their own. Greek spectators could not decode

[35] Lydia Koniordou points out that the audience's response was a healthy reaction and that *Medea*'s staging was not arbitrary. "Some scenes were harsh, because the play itself is harsh" (quote in Zaligas, K. 2008:34).

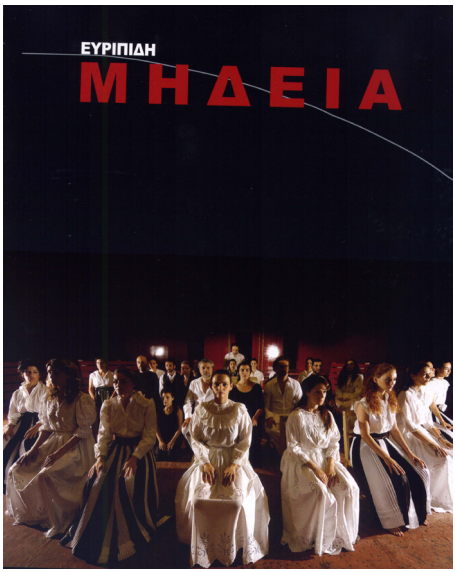
[36] Lydia Koniordou felt that the audience was so violent in its response that she felt as if she was in an arena full of lions (Loverdou, M. 2008b). Aglaia Pappa mentioned that she felt she was in the middle of a fight and therefore she felt alive (Marinou, E. 2008c) and Nick Psarras was shocked because of that violence (quote in Zaligas, K. 2008).

[37] Loverdou, M. 2008c. The critic Vassilis Angelikopoulos points out that Vassiliev did not respect the audience's endurance and tolerance, that this production was "a howling sin of the most acute provocation", in Angelikopoulos, V. 2008b.

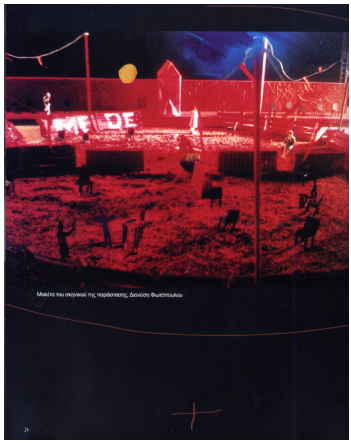
Vassiliev's modern interpretation; they could not recognise themselves in the production. Many things that took place in the orchestra did not manage to reach the audience[38]. The director's intentions backfired.

Official programme pictures - The use of the official programme pictures is authorized by the Municipal and Regional Theatre of Patras

Epidavros Ancient Theatre, 15th & 16th of August 2008



[38] Payatakis, S. 2008. Hardwick, L. 2008: 87 quotes Appiah, K. A. (1993), "Thick Translation", *Callaloo*, 16. 4: 808-819, "A translation aims to produce a new text that matters to one community the way another text matters to another". The same applies to the performance as a polymorphic text.


ΜΗΔΕ
Μακέτα του σκηνικού της παράστασης Δανάη Φωτόπουλου

Bibliography

Altena, H. (2008), "Performance Analysis" in *Exploring European Identities/Ideologies by means of (Re)Presentations of Ancient Greek Drama*. Athens: European Network of Research and Documentation of Performances of Ancient Greek Drama, 157-165.

Angelikopoulos, V. (review-2008a), "Novelties and hooting at Epidaurus", *Kathimerini*, 7 September.

Angelikopoulos, V. (review-2008b), "Prompt-box", *Kathimerini*, 24 August.

Barka, F. (2008), "Audience's response was fair and democratic", interview of Koniordou, L., *Eleftherotypia,* 18 August.

Chatziantoniou, N. (review-2008), "It is not accidental that foreign directors get hooted", *Eleftherotypia,* 6 September.

Farazi, C. (review-2008), "Change of 'setting' and applause", *Eleftheros Typos*, 22 August, 38-39

Fischer-Lichte, E. (2008), "Transformations of Ancient Greek Theatre" in *Exploring European Identities/ Ideologies by means of (Re)Presentations of Ancient Greek Drama*. Athens: European Network of Research and Documentation of Performances of Ancient Greek Drama, 27-32.

Georgakopoulou, V., Karouzakis, G., Barka, F., Papaioannou, C., Chatziantoniou (reportage-2008), "The lost innocence of hooting", *Eleftherotypia,* 20 August.

Georgousopoulos, K. (review-1997), "Ignorant bubbles", *Ta Nea*, 2 September, [Online] Available: http:// www.tanea.gr/ default.asp?pid=2&ct=1&artid=3978531 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Georgousopoulos, K. (review - 1999), "Is everything allowed?", *Ta Nea,* 13 August, 22-23.

Georgousopoulos, K. (review-2008), "Innovation as ***horror vacui***", *Ta Nea*, 25 August, [Online] Available: http://www.tanea.gr/default.asp?pid=2&ct=4&artid=83118 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Goldhill, S. (2007), *How to Stage Greek Tragedy*. London: The University of Chicago Press.

Hardwick, L. (ed.) (1999-2004), *Critical Essays*. *Documenting and Researching Modern Productions of Greek Drama: The Sources* (collection of seven essays in Website Open University UK). [Online] Available: http://www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays/essays/essayindex.htm [Accessed 7th April 2010]

Hardwick, L. (2000), *Translating Words, Translating Cultures*. London: Duckworth.

Hardwick, L. & Stray, Chr. (2008), *A Companion to Classical Receptions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hardwick, L. (2009), "Transplanting Greek Drama to the Modern Stage", in *Exploring European Identities/Ideologies by means of (Re)Presentations of Ancient Greek Drama*. Athens: European Network of Research and Documentation of Performances of Ancient Greek Drama, 83-94.

Ioannidis, G. (review-2008), "Epidaurus", *Eleftherotypia*, 6 September, [Online] Available: http://archive.enet.gr/online/online_hprint?q=%25E2%25E1%25F3%25DF%25EB%25E9%25E5%25F6&a=&id=74685192 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Kirikou, T. (2000), "Plato is the base of theatre education", interview of Vassiliev, A., *To Vima*, 30 July, [Online] Available: http://www.tovima.gr/default.asp?pid=2&artid=124786&ct=80&dt=30/07/2000 [Accessed 7th April 2010]

Loverdou, M. (review-1997), "Spectators against actors", *To Vima*, 7 September, [Online] Available: http://www.tovima.gr/default.asp?pid=2&ct=114&artid=90891&dt=07/09/1997 [Accessed 7th April 2010]

Loverdou, M. (2008a), "Athens is not suitable for theatre", interview of Vassiliev, A., *To Vima*, 3 August, [Online] Available: http://www.tovima.gr/default.asp?pid=2&artid=190297&ct=34&dt=03/08/2008 [Accessed 7th April 2010]

Loverdou, M. (2008b), "The audience wanted to tear us apart", interview of Koniordou, L., *To Vima*, 24 August, [Online] Available: http://www.tovima.gr/default.asp?pid=2&artid=190650&ct=34&dt=24/08/2008 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Loverdou, M. (review-2008c), "The other side of the applause", *To Vima*, 24 August, [Online] Available: http://www.tovima.gr/default.asp?pid=2&artid=190649&ct=34&dt=24/08/2008 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Marinou, E. (2008a), "Calmness is stillness", interview of Vassiliev, A., *Eleftherotypia,* 30 March, [Online] Available: http://archive.enet.gr/online/online_hprint?q=%25E2%25E1%25F3%25DF%25EB%25E9%25E5%25F6&a=&id=92633712 [Accessed 7th April 2010]

Marinou, E. (review-2008b), "Everything in red", *Eleftherotypia,* 10 August, [Online] Available: http://archive.enet.gr/online/online_hprint?q=%25E2%25E1%25F3%25DF%25EB%25E9%25E5%25F6&a=&id=28760664 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Marinou, E. (2008c), "I relived the sit-ins of the '80's", interview of Pappa, A., *Eleftherotypia*, 24 August, [Online] Available: http://archive.enet.gr/online/online_hprint?q=%25E2%25E1%25F3%25DF%25EB%25E9%25E5%25F6&a=&id=31657592 ([Accessed 7th April 2010].

Nikolaidis, V. (review-2008), "A reply to *Medea*", *Ta Nea*, 21 August, [Online] Available: http://www.tanea.gr/default.asp?pid=2&ct=4&artid=82620 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Payatakis, S. (review-2008), "*Medea* was not that bad", *Kathimerini,* 31 August, [Online] Available: http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/_w_articles_civ_2_31/08/2008_282691 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Samara, Z. (2000), "I love the actors", *To Vima*, 2 January, [Online] Available: http://www.tovima.gr/default.asp?pid=2&artid=117979&ct=47&dt=02/01/2000 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Sarigiannis, G. (review-2008a), "Epidaurus", *Ta Nea*, 18 August, [Online] Available: http://www.tanea.gr/default.asp?pid=2&ct=4&artid=82038 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Sarigiannis, G. Theodorakopoulos, P . (review-2008b), "Medea, the day after", *Ta Nea*, 19 August, [Online] Available: http://www.tanea.gr/default.asp?pid=2&ct=4&artid=82217 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Varopoulou, E. (review-1997), "Scandals' praise", *To Vima*, 7 September, [Online] Available: http://www.tovima.gr/default.asp?pid=2&ct=114&artid=90893&dt=07/09/1997 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Vassiliev, A. (1999), *Sept ou huit leçons de théâtre*. Paris: Editions P.O.L.

Author uknown, (review-2008), "Vassiliev's viewpoint of Medea", *Kathimerini*, 12 August, [Online] Available: http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/_w_articles_civ_2_12/08/2008_280906 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Vidalis, G. (review-2008a), "Medea, the *rebetiko* singer", *Eleftherotypia*, 25 July, [Online] Available: http://archive.enet.gr/online/online_hprint?q=%25E2%25E1%25F3%25DF%25EB%25E9%25E5%25F6&a=&id=81323856 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Vidalis, G. (2008b), "Only Christian hypocrites think Medea as an infanticide", interview of Vassiliev, A., *Eleftherotypia*, 9 August, [Online] Available: http://archive.enet.gr/online/online_hprint?q=%25E2%25E1%25F3%25DF%25EB%25E9%25E5%25F6&a=&id=78960664 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Vidalis, G. (2008c), "Vassiliev is today's Koun and Rontiris", interview of Koniordou, L., *Eleftherotypia*, 9 August, [Online] Available: http://archive.enet.gr/online/online_hprint?q=%25E2%25E1%25F3%25DF%25EB%25E9%25E5%25F6&a=&id=92780312 [Accessed 7th April 2010].

Wiles, D. (2000), *Greek Theatre Performance: an Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zaligas, K. (review-2008), "They turned their back on *Medea*", *Eleftheros Typos*, 18 August, 32-33.

Seneca's *Phaedra* - an over passionate heroine: analysis of Hana Buresova's *Faidra*

Eliška Poláčková
(Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic)

Performances of Seneca´s plays are rarely seen on the Czech stages – the only staging of a play written by this ancient author before Burešová´s performance was *Phaedra* in 1977 in the Theatre at the Periphery[1], which was rather an adaptation, though[2]. The idea prevails among (not only) Czech classical philologists that Seneca´s plays were not meant to be performed, so that they are extremely difficult – if not impossible – to be staged. At the same time, it would be naïve to presume Czech directors, having virtually no tradition of staging Seneca to fall back on, would be eager to search for interesting unknown ancient plays and put them on the stage. Without a close cooperation of both theatre-makers and classical philologists – which is the case in Burešová´s performance – the false idea of impossibility to stage this author can never be changed in the Czech Republic.

It would be instructive to find out the roots of this 'superstition' concerning (im)possibility of staging Seneca as its effects can be seen not only in the Czech

[1] Seneca, *…aneb Faidra (…or Phaedra)*. Translation: Zdena Hadrbolcová a Josef Kostohryz. First staging: 28th June 1977. Director: Ewald Schorm.

[2] This, however, is true only with respect to modern staging of Seneca´s plays. There is evidence about his plays being staged by Jesuits during 17th century in several monastic and public schools.

Republic but almost in the whole Central and Eastern Europe[3]. It is a fact that almost no evidence exists for Seneca´s plays being staged in antiquity. However, almost no evidence for any other tragedy being staged in Seneca´s times and later exists either. As a consequence, the period of *Principate*, *Dominate* and the crisis of Roman Empire is seen in the history of the theatre as an epoch without drama. It means that in those times theatre performances were not primarily based on dramatic texts. On the contrary, theatre forms based on improvisation, music and movement flourished, such as *mimos*, *pantomimos* or farce[4].

Obviously, tragedy and comedy did not totally disappear, only they were hardly ever staged in the theatre buildings or performed in full. Yet they existed in various forms and were performed at many, more or less private, occasions – during symposia in palaces or private houses by hired actors, in bathhouses (*balneae*) by the author himself and his friends, or at some special private or public occasion. In all these cases, rarely was the whole piece performed. Only selected parts from the play were either performed, recited or sung. Certainly, it does not not mean that drama – or Seneca´s tragedies to be more specific – was not staged at all at the end of antiquity. Historians and other writers only did not consider these theatrical forms worthy of recording, hence the idea that Roman tragedy (of which Seneca is the only preserved author) was impossible to stage.

[3] In France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, on the contrary, a staging of Seneca´s plays has an indispensable tradition.

[4] McDonald, M., Walton, J. M. 2007: 365.

This opinion only took root as late as in the 17th century with the period of classicism. Before then there were no doubts whether these plays were or were not 'stagable' in the present or staged in the past, and these doubts have never been raised in France[5] at all because of the long-lasting tradition of staging Seneca there.

Apart from this, there is another possible reason for Seneca´s non-presence on the European stages. It is the misunderstanding of the differences between Greek and Roman tragedy, of their distinctive features, structure and esthetic criteria applied to this genre in both cultures. From the scarce remnants of Roman tragic texts, the basic characteristics of Roman tragedy[6] in opposition to the Greek one can be deduced. First, the dramatic structure of the former is loosened and more epic in comparison with the latter, as the genre became primarily a literary one only with the inherent possibility of staging. As a consequence, the structure of the tragic text was assimilated to the structure of written text that is meant to be read (and re-read) rather than viewed. Next, the esthetic criteria applied on these texts were, therefore, different as well. The more refined, stylistically elaborate and embellished with poetic words the text was, the better it fulfilled the expectations of its recipients. Greek tragedy, on the contrary, employed the literary devices primarily according to their suitability for the dramatic impact. Finally, the audience of the 1st

[5] The tradition comes from the reputation Racine gained for Seneca by the adaptations of his plays.

[6] It would be more appropriate, though, to speak about Seneca´s tragedy as the only preserved texts are those of Seneca.

century A. D. – consisting of the citizens of the most powerful and developed empire in the world at that time – expected different emotions from tragedy than the 5th-century Athenians, thus the shocking and brutal scenes in the preserved Roman tragedies in comparison with the well-balanced austerity of the Greek ones. These differences coming from historical and cultural background have been later subjected to the process of evaluation[7], through which Greek tragedy came across as the more valuable of the two. The criteria, however, were contemporary, which makes the whole evaluation pointless. Nevertheless, it has been widely accepted by both classical philologists and theatre-makers who, as a consequence, deal almost exclusively with Greek tragedy, putting the Roman one aside.

Hana Burešová, contemporary Czech theatre director, is the second one[8] to oppose the neglecting of Seneca on the Czech stages. She is one of the few Czech directors who are not afraid of bringing strong emotions and *pathos* on the stage. It is, therefore, no surprise that she was able to find a suitable strategy for putting Seneca´s *Phaedra* on stage of Divadlo v Dlouhé (The Theatre at Dlouhá Street) in 2007. The 85 minutes long performance has been played many times since its first staging both in the Czech Republic and abroad, and is still on the repertoire of Divadlo v Dlouhé. Although demanding high esthetic and intellectual requirements

[7] Roman tragedy did not match the requirements of classicism for the well-balanced structure and austere ideology, as presented by (their reading of) Aristotle.

[8] For the first one see the first footnote of this paper.

from its recipients, the performance became extremely successful – it gained praising responses from both the critics and the audience, and Helena Dvořáková was awarded the Alfréd Radok´s Prize[9] for the role of Phaedra.

The reason for that success should be seen in Burešová´s approach to Seneca´s play. She did not intend to modernize or adapt the original text or its meaning in any way. In other words, she rejected the method of actualization and tried to be as faithful to the meaning of the play as possible[10]. This tendency resulted in several concepts employed in the performance: (1) rejection of the realism-game in depicting the plot and characters on the stage; (2) use of naturalism in the depicting; (3) influence of the director Ariane Mnouchkine.

The influence of Mnouchkine, the famous contemporary French stage director, can be traced in the whole concept of the performance as well as in the singular components. Burešová took inspiration e. g. from Mnouchkine´s *Oresteia* (*Les Atrides*)[11], in which Mnouchkine applies the concept of language in the theatre presented by Meyerhold[12]. According to his

[9] It is an annual prize of Czech theatre critics awarded to the best theatre achievements (the best performance, male actor etc.)

[10] I am aware of the fact that "fidelity to the original meaning" is rather a tricky expression. Burešová, in my opinion, tried to understand and consequently present on the stage the basic concepts inherent in the text of the play and to emphasize the qualities of the text by the scenic actions.

[11] See http://www.lebacausoleil.com/SPIP/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=16 for the pictures from the performance.

[12] Vsevolod Emilevich Meyerhold (1874-1940), Russian director, actor and producer.

theory[13], language in the theatre is hardly more than the means of decorating the design and the movement. That is, words on the stage should serve other components (music, motion, etc.) of the performance rather than evoke some narrative and dramatic meaning on their own. Inadequate as the theory may seem when applied on a playwright such as Seneca, Burešová creates on its grounds the performance in which the words are not the most important component, as is usual with the performances of ancient drama as a whole. On the contrary, she employs the design, the costumes and especially the style of acting as the components similarly important for creating the meaning of the play as the words are.

Concerning the costumes and the style of acting, the inspiration by Mnouchkine leads Burešová to the non-western cultural tradition, especially to the tradition of the Asian theatre. The inspiration by the Asian ways of acting is clearly visible in the actions and movement of the chorus and stylized acting of the characters. As the choice of these particular devices is motivated by the pursuit of the unrealistic projection, the style of acting will be dealt with later. Costumes also remind us of Mnouchkine´s *Oresteia* in the use of clear distinctive colours (e. g. red, white, gold), which characterize the persons (e. g. white Hippolytus is a virgin) as well as serve as symbols (e. g. red as a colour of love and blood). Another similar feature of the two performances is the masks used in both of them, covering only half of the

[13] Braun, E. 1998: 347.

actor´s face (Eumenides in *Oresteia*, Theseus in *Faidra*).

The non-western inspiration also appears in musical component of the performance. There are two sources of music in the performance: recording and the live music performed on the stage. The latter is produced in the non-western way by a non-western character – a dervish. Man in a long red dress with a wide skirt executes several functions in the performance. First, he delivers particular speeches, such as that of the Messenger or some parts of the chorus´ songs. Second, he is the musician – he has several kinds of strange musical instruments at hand, such as a metal bowl, which produces high-pitched tones when struck on the edge by a wooden pestle, or a wooden tube, which produces the sound of rain when turned upside-down. These instruments create sounds strange to the ear of the European audience, which feels something unfamiliar and distant is happening on the stage. As a result, Burešová widens rather than narrows the gap between the text and the audience and does not strive to make the play actual in the temporal or spatial sense. However, by this approach its ideological and intellectual proximity appears crystal clear. Third, the dervish creates an ideological alter-ego to Phaedra herself. The whole performance ends with his whirling dance. The man starts turning around slowly and then quickens the pace until a rapid frenetic movement, his red skirt flying around his body while the lights slowly turn down. This state of ecstasy reminds us of Phaedra´s mindless outbursts and the previous idea of passion ruling all human deeds seems to be confirmed by this final image.

As mentioned above, one of the basic concepts of Burešová´s performance is the unrealistic projection of the plot and characters of Seneca´s play. This strategy is, in fact, inherent to the text itself, because ancient theatre did not have anything similar to the 'realistic' or 'psychological' acting. The actions on the stage were depicted and perceived as imaginary and were thus performed in a stylized way. This is particularly true of Roman tragedy, which was extremely emotional and 'expressionistic' and was obviously performed as such.

Burešová adopts this strategy and instructs the actors to play in a highly stylized way to emphasize the emotional and pathetic character of Seneca´s text. The way in which the actors deliver their speeches reveals the non-dramatic features of the play. There is not much dialogue, rather long lyrical monologues that are recited by the actors with a deep emotional empathy manifested by frequent changes in the melody and pitch of voice. Speech power is also used elaborately to express the changing emotions. Furthermore, the movement is carefully measured: each gesture has its particular meaning and the slowness, with which it is often executed, emphasizes the meaning.

The actions and speeches of the chorus are even more stylized than those of the characters. The four female members of the chorus are present on stage practically throughout the performance. Sometimes they are only silent observers of the actions performed by the characters. More often, though, they participate in one way or another in the action, either by movement

(e. g. rolling on the stage, performing strange dances) or by singular utterances (usually echo responses of single words accompanying choral parts delivered by the 'dervish'). They also recite several choral songs employing alternatively single- or multiple-recitation. The tone of their voice is by no means colloquial – it is rather high-stylish, pathetic and full of emotions. The same can be said about their movements, which do not seem to be influenced by any particular tradition (neither western nor eastern one).

This accentuated way of acting is highlighted by the similarly non-realistic stage design. There is only one object present on the stage: square transparent crystal in the center that can be lit with different-coloured lights. At the back of the stage, a high wall, which can also change colour, made of glass or transparent plastic is erected; drops of water reminiscent of tears appear on it at the end of the performance. Apart from this, the whole stage is empty and covered with black. The acting comes very much to the fore with such an indistinct and meaningless backdrop, which is exactly what Burešová intended. The changes of coloured lights, mirrored on the crystal and the wall, serve to depict and emphasize the exaggerated emotions presented in the scene.

The third concept of Burešová´s *Faidra* to deal with is the extreme naturalism of the depiction and imagery of the performance. This feature is once again inherent in the text of the play, as Seneca´s audience wished to see terrible deeds and shocking actions presented on the stage, or at least hear about them in

detail. Therefore, there are several scenes in the play, in which the naturalistic description of something terrible is presented. The most terrible of them all is the Messenger´s speech reporting with chirurgical accuracy the process of Hippolytus' death. Burešová understands very well the impact of every word on the audience and does not support their meaning by anything else other than music (its presence or non-presence by contrast). On the other hand, she uses naturalistic way of depiction in other scenes, where there was originally no explicit violence or shocking effect. One of them is the scene in which Phaedra reveals her naked breast to Hippolytus in the last desperate attempt to gain his affection. Taking into consideration how close the audience is to the actress[14], the impact of seeing a woman´s naked breast for rather a long time is definitely powerful.

There is another set of scenes with a similarly powerful impact. These are connected with the motive of blood. In the first of these scenes, Theseus finds his son´s sword in Phaedra´s bedroom and is finally persuaded to believe it was Hippolytus who seduced her. In this moment, he grabs the sword and holds it strong in his hand. After a few seconds, his hand starts bleeding as if cut by the blade and the streams of his blood flow down the blade. Then the Messenger´s speech comes and at the end of it, streams of blood flow down from Theseus´ eyes once again. The motive of blood is thus amplified to bring many connotations and possible

[14] The audience is sitting right on the stage having extremely close contact with the actors.

meanings. The climax is the scene in which the bloody parts of Hippolytus' body are brought together in a white cloth. Both Theseus and Phaedra dip their hands into the bloody mass and blur the blood over the glass objects on the scene. Again, the connotations brought by this action are extremely powerful in the context of the whole play.

Putting together the concept of naturalism with the realistic strategy, it seems Phaedra is definitely too passionate a heroine, at least for the contemporary Czech (European) audience, which is not used to seeing such strong emotions and *pathos* presented on stage. However, it is not a sufficient reason for expelling Seneca's *Phaedra* completely from playhouses. Burešová´s performance proves the possibility of staging this play with success. She creates the convincing image of the situation, in which it is adequate to ask: *Shall the world hear of strange prodigies, shall nature's laws give way, whenever a Cretan woman loves*?[15]

[15] *Natura totiens legibus cedet suis,/quotiens amabit Cressa*? (Seneca, *Phaedra*: vv. 176-177).

Bibliography

Braun, E. (1998), *Meyerhold: A Revolution in Theatre*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

(2007) 'Faidra', *The Database of Staging of Greek and Roman Drama on Czech Scenes*. [Online] Available: http://drama.olympos.cz/ [Accessed 22th June 2009]

Lawall, G.; Kinkel, G.; Lawall, S. (1982), *Seneca. Phaedra.* Mundelein: Bolchazy-Carducci.

McDonald, M.; Walton, J. M. (2007), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

(5th Dec 2008) "The Performance of Faidra", *The Official Web Page of Divadlo v Dlouhé*. [Online] Available: http://www.divadlovdlouhe.cz/index.php?show=predstaveni&id=155 [Accessed 22th June 2009]

(30th May 2005) "The Performance of *Les Atrides*", *The Official Web Page of* Le Théâtre du Soleil. [Online] Available: http://www.lebacausoleil.com/SPIP/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=16 [Accessed 22th Jun 2009]

Innocent victim or scheming seductress? Euripides' Phaedra (*Hippolytus*) and Kalidas's Urvashi (*Vikramorvasiyam*): a comparative study of two tragic heroines

Bijon Sinha
(Open University, U.K.)

In this presentation, in the time permitted, I want to try and highlight some similarities of Hindu/ sophistic thought using stereotypes and imagery from both Greek and Indian mythology. Portrayals of images: in more contemporary art of Phaedra and Urvashi depict them as listless, forlorn, loosely adorned, loosely attired, untied hair etc, matching the language of the original texts.

Urvashi is often portrayed with her lover, Pururavas- she having crossed the boundary from celestial to human being, from purity and chastity to its antithetical state of loss of chastity.

Here, I attempt to use philosophical models from an inherent tradition of Sanskritic thought to inform an interpretation of the Phaedra character from another angle, given that her position and actions represent a familiar model in Sanskrit literature (as an aside, the character of Hippolytus' devotion and worship of one particular goddess conforms with the Hindu Bhramanical tradition represented by his asceticism and vegetarianism. But that is another matter and the subject of another comparative study).

The concepts of **chastity** and **seduction** are considered in terms of an example of the kind of polarities presented under the so-called 'Binary Opposition' of Apollonian and Dionysian dynamics, as part of Aristotelian *Metaphysics* and the Pythagorean *Table of Opposites*, later also propounded by Nietzsche.

Drawing from *Hippolytus*, Phaedra's role as tragic heroine can be argued in terms of Hippolytus, if seen as an incarnation of chastity and Phaedra's personification as seductress, as part of such Opposition, as well as also being part of a wider dialectical process of thesis, antithesis and, ultimately, synthesis, which ultimately arrives at a point of resolution, but only to be challenged again as part of a cyclic dance of creation, destruction and re-creation.

This philosophy sits well with Ancient Hindu/ Sanskritic philosophy of *advaita*, as exemplified in Urvashi, the character from Kalidasa who shares a communality with Phaedra, but unlike Phaedra, this same character is herself eventually transformed – from chaste virgin to seductress and then to a new status quo in which she and the characters in the play are enlightened by dint of her experiences and life's journey. It would be interesting to speculate on the possibilities of outcomes if Phaedra did not die - how then would such resolution be found. But that dilemma is for another time and place, perhaps.

Hippolytus, although a "complex, multi-layered, and at times unfathomable" play, nonetheless can be

viewed as exemplifying the 'Binary Opposition' thought as part of its Sophistic 'message'. Aphrodite, goddess of sex vs Artemis, goddess of chastity; sexual vs chaste; 'polar notions of sexual aggression vs repudiation of sexuality'; too much chastity vs too much promiscuity (this duality could also be seen in terms of Euripides' decision to write two versions on the theme of Hippolytus: *Hippolytus Kaluptomenos (Hippolytus Veiled or Hippolytus hiding himself in shame as Phaedra proposes to him on-stage)* and the extant full version that we have today, I would suggest could also be seen as governed by this greater dynamic: the latter version being a 'chaste' version of the former, more sexually-daring version, one might say).

Like Phaedra, an analysis of Urvashi shows a highly complex, ambiguous character: mythological figures are often used hermeneutically in the works of Kalidasa. As a woman, she is neither wife, mother, nor daughter. She is too human a woman to be a nymph and either is she completely human. Her relationship with her lover, Pururavas, is bipolar at different times in the play, their relationship is almost electrically charged – a deep mutual attraction, suspicion, infidelity. This creates a dynamic which questions the nature of love: eternal love or passing sexual attraction. It serves, as an overall purpose, to illustrate the constant, changing nature of life, referred to by Nietzsche as that dialectic process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis that can never rest in resolution but be locked in a continuum of 'light

footed opposition' which in itself is the resolution, encapsulating the Hindu philosophy that *change* itself is the only constant.

Etymologically-speaking, confusion of the terms 'chastity' and 'celibacy' has long existed. 'Chastity' — deriving from the Latin *castitas*, meaning 'cleanliness' or 'purity' — did not, under either philosophical system, necessarily mean the renunciation of all sexual relations, but rather the temperate sexual behaviour as legitimate conjugal rights, for the purpose of procreation, or the sexual continence of the unmarried. One Greek word-equivalent for chastity, *sophrosyne*, means moderation, which in the ancient Greek world was a main philosophical virtue. This entailed proper self-mastery for men, and the virtue appropriate to a devoted and child-bearing (or potentially child-bearing) wife. It did not necessarily mean the avoidance of sex altogether. Hinduism's view on premarital sex is rooted in its concept of the stages of life. The first of these stages, known as *brahmacharya,* roughly translates as chastity.

In conclusion, I would summarise by drawing together the concept of 'duality as polarity' as being the necessary resolution of binary opposition: one cannot exist without the other. Specific characters in each of the works, by displaying a personification of such polarity, display each component of the binary opposition.

The following are some major components of the binary opposition found in *Hippolytus* (the majority of which also occur in *Vikramorvasiyam*):

1. man vs woman
2. lust vs rejection
3. virginity vs marriage
4. purity (Phaedra: of food; Hippolytus: of body) vs pollution
5. resistance vs surrender
6. Cretan (outsider, lustful, mysterious) vs Trozen
7. quasi-incestuous relationship between step-mother and step child.
8. speech & silence opposition, on various levels:
- social
- sexual
- revelation vs concealment
- interior scenes vs exterior
9. Phaedra dying at the beginning, Hippolytus at the end
10. a play about 'apparent duality': 2 women, 2 men, and 2 goddesses
11. *semnos* (being virtuous) and *sôphronein* (chastity) meaning different things to different characters.

Like *Vikramorvasiyam*, *Hippolytus* is complex play – nothing is what it seems. The ascetic ideal reflects a mode of thinking dividing the world into

Binary Oppositions of good/bad; male/female; being/becoming; reason/emotion; spirit/body; it then validates the poles of opposition and negates each other. French structural anthropologist Levi-Strauss argued that Binary Oppositions are at the heart of people's attempts to come to terms with reality.

The title of this conference, "Tragic heroines" could itself be interpreted in terms of this binary formulaic application: in the term 'heroine', we require the corollary of 'hero', 'villain' or 'other protagonist' against whom the heroine can be compared and contrasted. 'The tragic' (or consequences of the tragedy) requires some form of resolution: in *Hippolytus*, this could, in Sanskritic philosophy, be interpreted as the *enlightenment* of Theseus after the deaths of his wife and son. In *Vikramorvasiyam*, that *enlightenment* comes as the eventual choices that Urvashi and Pururavas make to remain on earth or return to heaven. In simplistic terms, both sets of characters are, under the terms of Greek tragedy, ultimately ruled by the play of gods in which they are all mere pawns.

Such an interpretation finds accord with the philosophy of Nietzsche who sought to encompass all opposites – all the clashing and conflict of life's multivalent urges - and to bring them together into an organic greater whole. This is not a harmony of resolving all tensions, but rather a celebration of dynamic tension itself, a celebration of the rhythm

and pulse of life that creates and destroys and creates again, in joy and sorrow, in a spirit of endless play.

Bibliography

Armstrong, R. (2006), *Cretan Women: Pasiphae, Ariadne, and Phaedra in Latin Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Conacher, D. J. (1998), *Euripides and the Sophists: Some Dramatic Treatments of Philosophical Ideas*. London: Duckworth.

Dawson, J. (1950), *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History and Literature*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Horrowitz, E. P. (1912), *The Indian Theatre: a Brief Survey of the Sanskrit Drama*. London: Blackie & Son Ltd.

Marlow, A. N. (1954), "Hinduism and Buddhism in Greek Philosophy", *Philosophy East and West* 4. 1. Hawaii: University Press of Hawaii, 35-45. [Online] Available: http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-PHIL/marlow.htm [Accessed 28th January 2009]

Morwood, J. (1997), *Euripides, Medea and Other Plays*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mills, S. (2002), *Euripides: Hippolytus, Duckworth Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy*. London: Duckworth.

Mossman, J. ed. (2003), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Euripides.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rajan, C. (2006), *The Loom of Time: Kalidasa - a Selection of his Plays and Poems*. London: Penguin Books.

Seaford, R. (1995), *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-state*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Colecção Autores
Gregos e Latinos – Série Ensaios

1. Carmen Soares, José Ribeiro Ferreira e Maria do Céu Fialho: *Ética e Paideia em Plutarco* (Coimbra, CECH, 2008).

2. Joaquim Pinheiro, José Ribeiro Ferreira e Rita Marnoto: *Caminhos de Plutarco na Europa* (Coimbra, CECH, 2008).

3. Cláudia Teixeira, Delfim F. Leão and Paulo Sérgio Ferreira: *The Satyricon of Petronius: Genre, Wandering and Style* (Coimbra, CECH, 2008).

4. Teresa Carvalho, Carlos A. Martins de Jesus: *Fragmentos de um Fascínio. Sete ensaios sobre a poesia de José Jorge Letria* (Coimbra, CECH, 2009).

5. Delfim Ferreira Leão, José Ribeiro Ferreira e Maria do Céu Fialho: *Cidadania e Paideia na Grécia Antiga* (Coimbra, CECH, 2010).

6. Maria de Fátima Silva and Susana Hora Marques: *Tragic Heroines on Ancient and Modern Stage* (Coimbra, CECH, 2010).

Printing:
Simões & Linhares, Lda.
Av. Fernando Namora, n.º 83 - Loja 4
3000 Coimbra

The present work allows to share experiences and distinctive perspectives in the contemporary approach and treatment given to the plays of the Classical Antiquity and reflects the considerable increment in the number of modern adaptations on stage of the Classical tragic plays across a variety of stages, particularly in Europe from the second half of the 20th century, as well as the interest shown in such performances by the contemporary audience.